“Perfect Questions - Perfect Answers” Conversations between His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada and Bob Cohen, a Peace Corps worker in India.
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Introduction
God, spiritual life-those were such vague terms to me before I met Srila Prabhupada. I have always been interested in religion, but before I met the Krsna conscious devotees, somehow I did not have the proper perspective needed to inquire fruitfully about spiritual life. The existence of a Creator is only common sense--but who is God? Who am I? I had been to Hebrew School and had studied Oriental philosophy, but I could never get satisfying answers to my questions.
I first heard the Hare Krsna mantra in Greenwich Village, New York, in late 1968.
Hare Krsna Hare Krsna
Krsna Krsna Hare Hare
Hare Rama Hare Rama
Rama Rama Hare Hare
The chanting was captivating, and it made me feel very comfortable. The mantra stuck in my mind, and I soon regretted that I had not taken a magazine from the devotees. As explained to me later, a transcendental seed had been planted that could eventually ripen into love of Godhead. Several months later, I came across a card with the Hare Krsna mantra on it. The card promised, "Chant these names of God, and your life will be sublime!" I would occasionally chant, and I found that the mantra did, in fact, give me a feeling of peace of mind.
After graduating from college with a B.S. in chemistry, I joined the Peace Corps in 1971 and went to India as a science teacher. In India I inquired about the Hare Krsna movement. I was attracted by the chanting and intrigued by the philosophy, and I was curious about the movement's authenticity. I had visited the Krsna temple in New York several times before going to India, but I did not consider the seemingly austere life of a devotee for myself.
In India I first met the Krsna conscious devotees at a festival they were holding in Calcutta during October of 1971. The devotees explained to me the purpose of yoga and the need to inquire about spiritual life. I began to feel that the rituals and ceremonies they practiced were not dull, sentimental obligations, but a real, sensible

way of life.

At first, however, it was very difficult for me to understand the philosophy of Krsna consciousness. In so many subtle ways, my Western upbringing prevented me from seeing things that were as plain as the nose on my face! Fortunately the devotees convinced me of the need to practice some few basic austerities, and in this way I began to gain some insight into spiritual life. I can now recall how distant and tenuous were my concepts of spirituality and transcendental existence. I met Srila Prabhupada briefly at this time--in November of 1971--and shortly thereafter I decided to become a vegetarian. (I was proud of being a vegetarian, but later Srila Prabhupada reminded me that even pigeons are, too.)

In February of 1972, I met some devotees in Calcutta who invited me to a festival in Mayapur (a holy island ninety miles to the north). The festival was to be held in honor of Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu, who is considered an incarnation of Krsna Himself. I had then been planning a trip to Nepal, but the Peace Corps denied me permission to leave India, and so I went to Mayapur.

I left for Mayapur planning to stay for two days at the most, but I ended up staying a week. I was the only Western nondevotee on the island, and since I was living with the devotees on their land, this was a unique opportunity to learn intimately about Krsna consciousness.

On the third day of the festival, I was invited in to see Srila Prabhupada. He was living in a small hut--half-brick and half-thatched, with two or three pieces of simple furniture. Srila Prabhupada asked me to be seated and then asked how I was and whether I had any questions. The devotees had explained to me that Srila Prabhupada could answer my questions because he represents a disciplic succession of spiritual masters. I thought that Srila Prabhupada might really know what is going on in the world. After all, his devotees claimed this, and I admired and respected them. So with this in mind I began to ask my questions. Inadvertently, I had approached a guru, or spiritual master, in the prescribed way--by submissively asking questions about spiritual life.

Srila Prabhupada seemed pleased with me, and over the next several days, he answered my questions. I asked them mostly from an academic point of view, but he always gave me personal answers so that I would actually spiritualize my life. His answers were logical, scientific, satisfying and amazingly lucid. Before I met Srila Prabhupada and his disciples, spiritual life was always obscure and nebulous. But the discussions with Srila Prabhupada were realistic, clear and exciting!

Srila Prabhupada was patiently trying to help me understand that Krsna--God--is the supreme enjoyer, supreme friend and supreme proprietor. I put forward many impediments to accepting the obvious: that I would have to become serious about God consciousness to understand God. But Srila Prabhupada relentlessly yet kindly urged me on. Even though I had little ability to express myself, Srila Prabhupada understood my every inquiry and answered perfectly.

Bob Cohen

Chapter One

Krsna, the All-Attractive

Bob: What is a scientist?

Srila Prabhupada: One who knows things as they are.

Bob: He thinks he knows things as they are.

Srila Prabhupada: What?

Bob: He hopes he knows things as they are.

Srila Prabhupada: No, he is supposed to know. We approach the scientist because he is supposed to know things correctly. A scientist means one who knows things as they are. Krsna means "all-attractive."
Bob: All-attractive.
Srila Prabhupada: Yes. So unless God is all-attractive, how can He be God? A man is important when he is attractive. Is it not?
Bob: It is so.
Srila Prabhupada: So, God must be attractive and attractive for all. Therefore, if God has any name, or if you want to give any name to God, only "Krsna" can be given.
Bob: But why only the name Krsna?
Srila Prabhupada: Because He's all-attractive. Krsna means"allattractive."
Bob: Oh, I see.
Srila Prabhupada: Yes. God has no name, but by His qualities we give Him names. If a man is very beautiful, we call him "beautiful." If a man is very intelligent, we call him "wise.' So the name is given according to the quality. Because God is all-attractive, the name Krsna can be applied only to Him. Krsna means "all-attractive." It includes everything.
Bob: But what about a name meaning "all-powerful"?
Srila Prabhupada: Yes.... Unless you are powerful, how can you be allattractive?
Syamasundara: [an American devotee, Srila Prabhupada's secretary] It includes everything.
Srila Prabhupada: Everything. He must be very beautiful, He must be very wise, He must be very powerful, He must be very famous...
Bob: Is Krsna attractive to rascals?
Srila Prabhupada: Oh, yes! He was the greatest rascal also.
Bob: How is that?
Srila Prabhupada: [laughing] Because He was always teasing the gopis.
Syamasundara: Teasing?
Srila Prabhupada: Yes. Sometimes when Radharani would go out, Krsna would attack Her, and when She would fall down--"Krsna, don't torture Me in that way"--They would fall down, and Krsna would take the opportunity and kiss Her. [He laughs.] So, Radharani was very pleased, but superficially Krsna was the greatest rascal. So unless rascaldom is in Krsna, how could rascaldom be existent in the world? Our formula of God is that He is the source of everything. Unless rascaldom is in Krsna, how can it be manifest... because He is the source of everything. But His rascaldom is so nice that everyone worships His rascaldom.
Bob: What about the rascals who are not so nice?
Srila Prabhupada: No, rascaldom is not nice, but Krsna is absolute. He is God. Therefore His rascaldom is also good. Krsna is all-good. God is good.
Bob: Yes.
Srila Prabhupada: Therefore, when He becomes a rascal, that is also good. That is Krsna. Rascaldom is not good, but when it is practiced by Krsna, because He is absolutely good, that rascaldom is also good. This one has to understand.
Bob: Are there some people who do not find Krsna attractive?
Srila Prabhupada: No. All people will find Him attractive. Who is not attracted? just give an example: "This man or this living entity is not attracted to Krsna."Just find such a person.
Bob: Somebody who wishes to do things in life that he may feel are wrong but who wishes to gain power or prestige or money...

Srila Prabhupada: Yes.
Bob:... may find God unattractive. He may not find God attractive, because God gives him guilt.
Srila Prabhupada: No, not God. His attraction is to become powerful. A man wants to become powerful or rich--is it not? But nobody is richer than Krsna. Therefore Krsna is attractive to him.
Bob: If a person who wants to become rich prays to Krsna, will he become rich?
Srila Prabhupada: Oh, yes!
Bob: He can become rich through this means?
Srila Prabhupada: Oh, yes. Because Krsna is all-powerful, if you pray to Krsna to become rich, Krsna will make you rich.
Bob: If somebody lives an evil life but prays to become rich, he may still become rich?
Srila Prabhupada: Yes. Praying to Krsna is not evil.
Bob: Oh, yes.
Srila Prabhupada: [chuckling] Somehow or other he prays to Krsna, so you cannot say that he is evil.
Bob: Yes.
Srila Prabhupada: Krsna says in Bhagavad-gita, api cet suduracaro bhajate mam ananya-bhak. Have you read it?
Bob: Yes. The Sanskrit I don't know, but the English I do.
Srila Prabhupada: Hm-m.
Bob: "Even if the most evil man prays to Me..."
Srila Prabhupada: Yes.
Bob: "... He will be elevated."
Srila Prabhupada: Yes. As soon as he begins to pray to Krsna, that is not evil. Therefore He is all-attractive. It is said in the Vedas that the Absolute Truth, or the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is the reservoir of all pleasure--raso vai sah. Everyone is hankering after someone because he realizes some mellow in it.
Bob: Excuse me?
Srila Prabhupada: Some mellow. Suppose a man is drinking. Why is he drinking? He is getting some mellow out of that drinking. A man is hankering after money because by possessing money he gets a mellow out of it.
Bob: What does mellow mean?
Srila Prabhupada: [to Syamasundara] How do they define mellow?
Syamasundara: Taste, pleasure.
Bob: OK.
Srila Prabhupada: Pleasing taste. So the Vedas say, raso vai sah. The exact translation of mellow is rasa. [Malati, Syamasundara's wife, enters with a tray of food] What is that?
Malati:: Eggplant, fried.
Srila Prabhupada: Oh! All-attractive! All-attractive! [Laughter.]
Syamasundara: How is Krsna the greatest scientist?
Srila Prabhupada: Because He knows everything. A scientist is one who knows a subject matter thoroughly. He is a scientist. Krsna--He knows everything.
Bob: I am presently a science teacher.
Srila Prabhupada: Yes, teaching. But, unless you have perfect knowledge, how can you teach? That is our question.
Bob: Without perfect knowledge, though, you can teach--
Srila Prabhupada: That is cheating; that is not teaching. That is cheating. Just like the scientists say, "There was a chunk... and the

creation took place. Perhaps. Maybe..." What is this? Simply cheating! It is not teaching; it is cheating.
Bob: Let me repeat what you said this morning--that was interesting. I asked about miracles, and you said that only a fool would believe in miracles because--let us say you are a child and an adult lifts this table. That's a miracle. Or you're a chemist and you combine acid and base and you make smoke, an explosion or whatever. To somebody ignorant, that's a miracle. But for everything there is a process, and so when you see a miracle, it's just ignorance of the process. So that only a fool would believe in miracles, and--you correct me if I say wrong...
Srila Prabhupada: Yes, yes.
Bob: You said when Jesus came the people then were somewhat more ignorant and needed miracles as aid. I wasn't sure if that's quite what you said.
Srila Prabhupada: Yes, yes. Miracles are for the ignorant.
Bob: I had asked this in relation to all the miracle men you hear about in India.
Srila Prabhupada: Krsna is the highest miracle man.
Bob: Yes.
Srila Prabhupada: That is stated by Kunti...
Bob: Without perfect knowledge, can I not teach some things? For example, I may--
Srila Prabhupada: You can teach up to the point you know.
Bob: Yes, but I should not claim to teach more than I know.
Srila Prabhupada: Yes, that is cheating.
Syamasundara: In other words, he can't teach the truth with partial knowledge.
Srila Prabhupada: Yes. That is not possible for any human being. A human being has imperfect senses. So how can he teach perfect knowledge? Suppose you see the sun as a disc. You have no means to approach the sun. If you say that we can see the sun by telescope and this and that, they are also made by you, and you are imperfect. So how can your machine be perfect? Therefore, your knowledge of the sun is imperfect. So don't teach about the sun unless you have perfect knowledge. That is cheating.
Bob: But what about to teach that it is supposed that the sun is 93,000,000 miles away?
Srila Prabhupada: As soon as you say "it is supposed," it is not scientific.
Bob: But I think that almost all science, then, is not scientific.
Srila Prabhupada: That is the point!
Bob: All science is based on, you know, suppositions of this or that.
Srila Prabhupada: Yes. They are teaching imperfectly. Just like they are advertising so much about the moon. Do you think their knowledge is perfect?
Bob: No.
Srila Prabhupada: Then?
Bob: What is the proper duty of the teacher in society? Let us say a science teacher. What should he be doing in the classroom?
Srila Prabhupada: Classroom? You should simply teach about Krsna.
Bob: He should not teach about...
Srila Prabhupada: No. That will include everything. His aim should be to know Krsna.
Bob: Can a scientist teach the science of combining acid and alkaline, and this kind of science, with Krsna as its object?

Srila Prabhupada: How can it be?
Bob: If you--when one studies science, one finds general tendencies of nature, and these general tendencies of nature point to a controlling force....
Srila Prabhupada: That I was explaining the other day. I asked one chemist whether, according to chemical formulas, hydrogen and oxygen linked together become water. Do they not?
Bob: It's true.
Srila Prabhupada: Now, there is a vast amount of water in the Atlantic Ocean and Pacific Ocean. What quantity of chemicals was required?
Bob: How much?
Srila Prabhupada: Yes. How many tons?
Bob: Many!
Srila Prabhupada: So who supplied it?
Bob: This was supplied by God.
Srila Prabhupada: Somebody must have supplied it.
Bob: Yes.
Srila Prabhupada: So that is science. You can teach like that.
Bob: Should one bother teaching that if you combine acid and alkaline they form a neutral?
Srila Prabhupada: The same thing. There are so many effervescents. So, who is performing it? Who is supplying the acid and alkaline? [There is a long pause.]
Bob: So this comes from the same source as the water.
Srila Prabhupada: Yes. You cannot manufacture water unless you have hydrogen and oxygen. So, here is a vast--not only this Atlantic or Pacific: there are millions of planets, and there are millions of Atlantic and Pacific oceans. So who created this water with hydrogen and oxygen, and how was it supplied? That is our question. Somebody must have supplied it, otherwise how has it come into existence?
Bob: But should it also be taught how you make water from hydrogen and oxygen? The procedure of burning them together--should this also be taught? That is, you burn hydrogen and oxygen together...
Srila Prabhupada: That is secondary. That is not very difficult. Just like Malati made this puri [a kind of bread]. So, there is flour, and there is ghee [clarified butter], and she made a puri. But unless there is ghee and flour, where is the chance of making a puri? In the Bhagavad-gita there is this statement: "Water, earth, air, fire--they are My energies." What is your body? This external body--that is your energy. Do you know that? Your body is made out of your energy. For example, I am eating...
Bob: Yes.
Srila Prabhupada: So I am creating some energy, and therefore my body is maintained.
Bob: Oh, I see.
Srila Prabhupada: So therefore your body is made out of your energy.
Bob: But when you eat the food, there is energy from the sun in the food.
Srila Prabhupada: So, I am giving an example. I am creating some energy by digesting the food, and that is maintaining my body. If your energy supply is not proper, then your body becomes weak or unhealthy. Your body is made out of your own energy. Similarly, this gigantic cosmic body--the universe--is made of Krsna's energy. How can you deny it? As your body is made out of your energy, similarly the universal body must be made by somebody's energy. That is Krsna. [There is a long pause.]

Bob: I'll have to think about it to follow that.
Srila Prabhupada: What is to follow? It is a fact. [He laughs.] Your hair is growing daily. Why? Because you have some energy.
Bob: The energy I obtain from my food.
Srila Prabhupada: Somehow or other you have obtained that energy! And through that energy your hair is growing. So if your body is manufactured by your energy, similarly the whole gigantic manifestation is made of God's energy. It is a fact! It is not your energy.
Bob: Yes. Oh, I see that.
A devotee: Just like--aren't the planets in this universe the sun's energy--a product of the sun's energy?
Srila Prabhupada: Yes, but who produced the sun? That is Krsna's energy. Because it is heat, and Krsna says, bhumir apo 'nalo vayuh: "Heat--that is My energy." The sun is the representation of the heating energy of Krsna. It is not your energy. You cannot say, "The sun is made by me." But somebody must have made it, and Krsna says that He did. So, we believe Krsna. Therefore we are Krsna-ites.
Bob: Krsna-ites?
Srila Prabhupada: Yes. Our knowledge is perfect. If I say that heat is the energy of Krsna, you cannot deny it, because it is not your energy. In your body there is some certain amount of heat. Similarly, heat is someone's energy. And who is that person? That is Krsna. Krsna says, "Yes, it is My energy." So my knowledge is perfect. Because I take the version of the greatest scientist, I am the greatest scientist. I may be a fool personally, but because I take knowledge from the greatest scientist, I am the greatest scientist. I have no difficulty.
Bob: Excuse me?
Srila Prabhupada: I have no difficulty in becoming the greatest scientist because I take the knowledge from the greatest scientist. [There is a long pause.] "This earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, intelligence and ego--they are My eight separated energies."
Bob: They are separated energies?
Srila Prabhupada: Yes. Just like this milk. What is this milk? The separated energy of the cow. [Syamasundara and Bob, stunned, laugh in realization.] Is it not? It is the manifestation of the separated energy of the cow.
Syamasundara: Is it like a by-product?
Srila Prabhupada: Yes.
Bob: So, what is the significance of this energy's being separated from Krsna?
Srila Prabhupada: "Separated" means that this is made out of the body of the cow but it is not the cow. That is separation.
Bob: So, this earth and all is made out of Krsna but it is not Krsna?
Srila Prabhupada: It is not Krsna. Or, you can say, Krsna and not Krsna simultaneously. That is our philosophy. One and different. You cannot say that these things are different from Krsna, because without Krsna they have no existence. At the same time, you cannot say, "Then let me worship water. Why Krsna? The pantheists say that because everything is God, whatever we do is God worship. This is Mayavada philosophy--that because everything is made of God, therefore everything is God. But our philosophy is that everything is God but also not God.
Bob: So what on earth is God? Is there anything on earth that is God?
Srila Prabhupada: Yes. Because everything is made out of the energy of God. But that does not mean that by worshiping anything you are worshiping God.

Bob: So what is on earth that is not maya [illusion]? It is...
Srila Prabhupada: Maya means "energy."
Bob: It means energy?
Srila Prabhupada: Yes. Maya--and another meaning is "illusion." So foolish persons accept the energy as the energetic. That is maya. Just like sunshine. Sunshine enters your room. Sunshine is the energy of the sun. But because the sunshine enters your room, you cannot say that the sun
Srila Prabhupada: Just wire.
Bob: So if I build a statue of Krsna, it is not Krsna unless...
Srila Prabhupada: It is Krsna. But you have to know the process of understanding that it is Krsna. It is Krsna.
Bob: It is not just earth and mud.
Srila Prabhupada: No. Earth has no separate existence without Krsna. Krsna says, "My energy." You cannot separate the energy from the energetic. It is not possible. You cannot separate heat from fire. But fire is different from the heat, and heat is different from the fire. You are taking heat; that does not mean you are touching fire. Fire, in spite of emanating heat, keeps its identity. Similarly, although Krsna, by His different energies, is creating everything, He remains Krsna. The Mayavadi philosophers think that if Krsna is everything, then Krsna's separate identity is lost. That is material thinking. For example, by drinking this milk, little by little, when I finish, there is no more milk; it has gone to my belly. Krsna is not like that. He is omnipotent. We are utilizing His energy continually; still He is there, present. Just like a man begetting children unlimitedly, but the man is there. A crude example. It's not that because he has produced hundreds of children, he is finished. So, similarly, God or Krsna, in spite of His unlimited number of children, is there.
purnasya purnam adaya
purnam evavasisyate
"Because He is the complete whole, even though so many complete units emanate from Him, He remains the complete balance." This is Krsna consciousness. Krsna is never finished. Krsna is so powerful. Therefore He is all-attractive. This is one side of the display of Krsna's energy. Similarly, He has unlimited energies. This study of Krsna's energy is only one side, or a portion only. So in this way, if you go on studying Krsna, that is Krsna consciousness. It is not a bogus thing--"maybe," "perhaps not." Absolutely! It is!
Syamasundara: And the study itself is never finished.
Srila Prabhupada: No. How can it be? Krsna has unlimited energy.
Chapter Two
Vedic Culture: Varnasrama-dharma
Bob: I've asked devotees about how they feel towards sex in their relations, and I see the way they feel, but I can't see myself acting the same way. See, I'll be getting married at the end of this summer.
Srila Prabhupada: Hm-m?
Bob: I'll be getting married at the end of this summer, in September or August when I return to America. And the devotees say that the householders only have sex to conceive a child, and I cannot picture myself at all in such a position, and--What kind of sex life can one lead, living in the material world?
Srila Prabhupada: The Vedic principle is that one should avoid sex life altogether. The whole Vedic principle is to get liberation from material bondage. There are different attachments for material enjoyment, of

which sex life is the topmost enjoyment. The Bhagavatam says that this material world...
pumsah striya mithuni-bhavam etam
Man is attached to woman, and woman is attached to man. Not only in human society--in animal society also. That attachment is the basic principle of material life. So, a woman is hankering or seeking after the association of a man, and a man is hankering or seeking for the association of a woman. All the fiction novels, dramas, cinema and even ordinary advertisements that you see simply depict the attachment between man and woman. Even in the tailor's shop you will find in the window some woman and some man.
pravrttir esa bhutanam
nivrttis tu mahaphalam
So this attachment is already there.
Bob: Attachment between man and woman?
Srila Prabhupada: Man and woman. So if you want to get liberation from this material world, then that attachment should be reduced to nil. Otherwise, simply further attachment--You will have to take rebirth, either as a human being or as a demigod or as an animal, as a serpent, as a bird, as a beast. You will have to take birth. So, this basic principle of increasing attachment is not our business, although it is the general tendency. Grha, ksetra, suta [home, land, sons]. But if one can reduce and stop it, that is first class. Therefore our Vedic system is to first of all train a boy as a brahmacari--no sex life. The Vedic principle is to reduce attachment, not to increase it. Therefore the whole system is called varnasrama-dharma. The Indian system calls for varna and asrama--four social orders and four spiritual orders. Brahmacarya [celibate student life], grhastha [married life], vanaprastha [retired life] and sannyasa [renounced life]--these are the spiritual orders. And the social orders consist of brahmanas [intellectuals], ksatriyas [administrators], vaisyas [merchants and farmers] and sudras [ordinary workers]. So under this system, the regulative principles are so nice that
even if one has the tendency to enjoy material life, he is so nicely molded that at last he achieves liberation and goes back home, back to Godhead. This is the process. So sex life is not required, but because we are attached to it, therefore there are some regulative principles under which it is maintained.
[chanting starts somewhere in the background, with exotic mrdanga drumbeats amidst laughing and the loud blowing of horns.]
Srila Prabhupada: It is said in Srimad-Bhagavatam that--
pumsah striya mithuni-bhavam etam
tayor mitho hrdaya-granthim ahuh
ato grha-ksetra-sutapta-vittair
janasya moho 'yam aham mameti
(SB. 5.5.8)
This sex life is the basic principle of material life--attachment for man or woman. And when they are united, when a man and woman are united, that attachment becomes increased, and that increased attachment will induce one to accumulate grha (a home), ksetra (land), suta (children), apta (friendship or society) and vitta. Vita means money. In this way--grha-ksetra-sutapta-vittaih--he becomes entangled. janasya moho 'yam: this is the illusion. And by this illusion he thinks, aham mameti: "I am this body, and anything in relationship with this body is mine."

Bob: What is that again?
Srila Prabhupada: This attachment increases. The material attachment involves thinking, "I am this body, and because I have this body in a particular place, that is my country." And that is going on: "I am American, I am Indian, I am German, I am this, I am that--this body. This is my country. I shall sacrifice everything for my country and society." So in this way, the illusion increases. And under this illusion, when he dies he gets another body. That may be a superior body or inferior body, according to his karma. So if he gets a superior body, then that is also an entanglement, even if he goes to the heavenly planets. But if he becomes a cat or dog, then his life is lost. Or a tree--there is every chance of it. So this science is not known in the world--how the soul is transmigrating from one body to another, and how he is being entrapped in different types of bodies. This science is unknown. Therefore when Arjuna was speaking--"If I kill my brother, if I kill my grandfather on the other side..."--he was simply thinking on the basis of the bodily concept of life. But when his problems could not be solved, he surrendered to Krsna and accepted Him as spiritual master. And when Krsna became his spiritual master, He chastised Arjuna in the beginning:
asocyan anvasocas tvam
prajna-vadams ca bhasase
gatasun agatasums ca
nanusocanti panditah
"You are talking like a learned man, but you are fool number one because you are talking about the bodily concept of life." So this sex life increases the bodily concept of life. Therefore, the whole process is to reduce it to nil.
Bob: To reduce it over the stages of your life?
Srila Prabhupada: Yes. Reduce it. A boy is trained as a student up to twenty-five years, restricting sex life. Brahmacari. So, some of the boys remain naisthika-brahmacari [celibate for life]. Because they are given education and they become fully conversant with spiritual knowledge, they don't want to marry. That is also restricted--he cannot have sex life without being married. Therefore in human society there is marriage, not in animal society.
But people are gradually descending from human society to animal society. They are forgetting marriage. That is also predicted in the sastras. Dampatye 'bhirucir hetuh: in the Kaliyuga [the present age of quarrel], eventually there will be no marriage performances; the boy and the girl will simply agree to live together, and their relationship will exist on sexual power. If the man or the woman is deficient in sex life, then there is divorce. So, for this philosophy there are many Western philosophers like Freud and others who have written so many books. But according to Vedic culture, we are interested in sex only for begetting children, that's all. Not to study the psychology of sex life. There is already natural psychology for that. Even if one does not read any philosophy, he is sexually inclined. Nobody is taught it in the schools and colleges. Everyone already knows how to do it. [He laughs.] That is the general tendency. But education should be given to stop it. That is real education. [There is a long pause, filled with the sound of bicycle horns, children playing, and throngs of people calling to one another]
Bob: Presently, in America, that's a radical concept.
Srila Prabhupada: Well, in America there are so many things that require reformation, and this Krsna consciousness movement will bring that. I

went to your country and saw that the boys and girls were living like friends, so I said to my students, "You cannot live together as friends; you must get yourselves married."
Bob: Many people see that even marriage is not sacred, so they find no desire to marry. Because people get married, and if things are not proper, they get a divorce so very easily--
Srila Prabhupada: Yes, that also.
Bob:--that some people feel that to get married is not meaningful.
Srila Prabhupada: No, their idea is that marriage is for legalized prostitution. They think like that, but that is not marriage. Even that Christian paper--what is that? Watch--?
Syamasundara: Watchtower?
Srila Prabhupada: Watchtower. It has criticized that one priest has allowed a marriage between two men--homosexuality. So these things are all going on. They take it purely for prostitution, that's all. So therefore people are thinking, "What is the use of keeping a regular prostitute at such heavy expenditure? Better not to have this."
Syamasundara: You use that example of the cow and the market.
Srila Prabhupada: Yes--when the milk is available in the marketplace, what is the use of keeping a cow? [Everyone laughs.] It is a very abominable condition in the Western countries--I have seen it. Here also in India, gradually it is coming. Therefore we have started this Krsna consciousness movement to educate people in the essential principles of spiritual life. It is not a sectarian religious movement. It is a cultural movement for everyone's benefit.
Chapter Three
The Real Goal of life
(continued)
Srila Prabhupada: This movement is especially meant to enable a human being to reach the real goal of life.
Bob: The real goal... ?
Srila Prabhupada: The real goal of life.
Bob: Is the real goal of life to know God?
Srila Prabhupada: Yes. To go back home, back to Godhead. That is the real goal of life. The water that comes from the sea forms clouds, the clouds fall down as rain, and the actual goal is to flow down the river and again enter the sea. So, we have come from God, and now we are embarrassed by material life. Therefore, our aim should be to get out of this embarrassing situation and go back home, back to Godhead. This is the real goal of life.
mam upetya punarjanma
dahkhalayam asasvatam
napnuvanti mahatmanah
samsiddhim paramam gatak
["After attaining Me, the great souls, who are yogis in devotion, never return to this temporary world, which is full of miseries, because they have attained the highest perfection."] That is the version of Bhagavad-gita. If anyone comes to Me--mam upetya: he does not come back again. Where? To this place--dahkhalayam asasvatam. This place is the abode of miseries. Everyone knows, but they have been befooled by so-called leaders. Material life is miserable life. Krsna says, God says, that this place is dahkhalayam--it is a place of miseries. And it is also asasvatam, temporary. You cannot make a compromise: "All right, let it be miserable. I shall remain here as an American or Indian." No. That also you cannot do. You cannot remain an American. You may think that,

having been born in America, you are very happy. But you cannot remain an American for long. You will have to be kicked out of that place. And your next life you do not know! Therefore, it is dahkhalayam asasvatam--miserable and temporary. That is our philosophy.
Bob: But when you have some knowledge of God, then life is not so miserable?
Srila Prabhupada: No! Some knowledge will not do. You must have perfect knowledge.
janma karma ca me divyam
evam yo vetti tattvatah
Tattvatah means "perfectly." Perfect knowledge is being taught in Bhagavad-gita. So, we are giving everyone in human society a chance to learn Bhagavad-gita as it is and make his life perfect. That is the Krsna consciousness movement. What does your science say about the transmigration of the soul?
Bob: I think... that science... cannot deny or affirm it. Science does not know it.
Srila Prabhupada: Therefore I say that science is imperfect.
Bob: Science may. though, say something. It is said in science that energy is never destroyed; it is changed.
Srila Prabhupada: That's all right. But how the energy is working in the future--that science does not know. How is the energy diverted? How, by different manipulations, is the energy working differently? For instance, electrical energy. By different handling it is operating the heats and it is operating the refrigerator. They are just the opposite, but the electrical energy is the same. Similarly, this energy--living energy--how is it being directed? Which way is it going? How is it fructifying in the next life? That they do not know. But in Bhagavadgita it is very simply stated.
vasamsi jirnani yatha vihaya
You are covered by a dress, by a shirt. When this shirt is unusable, you change it. Similarly, this body is just like a shirt and coat. When it is no longer workable, we have to change it.
Bob: What is the "we" that has to change? What is constant?
Srila Prabhupada: That is the soul.
Bob: From one life to the next?
Srila Prabhupada: That is the soul--I. What "you" is speaking? You! What "I" is speaking? Identity: atma, or soul.
Bob: My soul is different from your soul?
Srila Prabhupada: Yes. You are an individual soul, I am an individual soul.
Bob: You have removed yourself from karmic influences. If I was to remove myself from karmic influences, would our souls be the same or different?
Srila Prabhupada: The soul is of the same quality in all. You are under a certain conception of life at the present moment, and these countrymen of yours [the Krsna conscious devotees] were under a certain conception of life, but by training they have taken to another conception of life. So the ultimate training is how to become Krsna conscious. That is the perfection.
Bob: If two people are Krsna conscious, is their soul the same?
Srila Prabhupada: The soul is always the same.
Bob: In each person? In each person is it the same?
Srila Prabhupada: Yes.
Bob: [pointing to two devotees] If these two are Krsna conscious, are

their souls the same?
Srila Prabhupada: The soul is the same but always individual, even if one is not Krsna conscious. For instance, you are a human being, and I am a human being. Even if I am not a Christian, even if you are not a Hindu, still we are human beings. Similarly, the soul may not be Krsna conscious, or he may be Krsna conscious--it doesn't matter. But the soul is the soul.
Bob: Can you tell me more about this?
Srila Prabhupada: Soul--as pure spirit, all souls are equal. Even in an animal. Therefore it is said, panditah sama-darsinah: those who are actually learned do not see the outward covering, either in a human being or in an animal.
Bob: If I may ask another question on this?
Srila Prabhupada: Yes.
Bob: I have considered the soul somewhat as part of God. At times I think I feel God. I'm here, and you may say God is here. So if the soul is inside me, then should I be able to feel God inside me? Not all of God, I mean, but a...
Srila Prabhupada: Part of God.
Bob: But I don't feel God in me, but God may be here, separate--separate from me. But should I be able to feel God inside me, since my soul is Part of God?
Srila Prabhupada: Yes. God is inside also. God is everywhere. God is inside and outside also. This is to be known.
Bob: How do you feel God inside you?
Srila Prabhupada: Not in the beginning, but you have to know from the sastras [scriptures], by the Vedic information. For example, in the Bhagavad-gita it is said, isvarah sarva-bhutanam hrd-dese 'rjuna tisthati: God is there in everyone's heart. Paramanu-cayantara-stham: God is also within every atom. So this is the first information. And then, by the yogic process, you have to realize it.
Bob: Yogic process?
Srila Prabhupada: Yes.
Bob: Is chanting Hare Krsna such a yogic process?
Srila Prabhupada: Yes, it is also a yogic process.
Bob: What kind of yogic process must I do to find out--to feel this information--to feel the soul inside?
Srila Prabhupada: Yes, there are many different yogic Processes, but for this age this process is very nice.
Bob: Chanting.
Srila Prabhupada: Yes.
Bob: Through this I can feel not only God outside but God inside?
Srila Prabhupada: You'll understand everything of God--how God is inside, how God is outside, how God is working. Everything will be revealed. By this attitude of service, God will reveal Himself. You cannot understand God by your endeavor. Only if God reveals Himself. For instance, when the sun is out of your sight at night, you cannot see it by your torchlight, or any light. But in the morning you can see the sun automatically. without any torchlight. Similarly, you have to create a situation--you have to put yourself in a situation--in which God will be revealed. It is not that by some method you can ask God, "Please come. I will see You." No, God is not your order carrier.
Bob: You must please God for Him to reveal Himself. Is that correct?
Srila Prabhupada: Yes.
Syamasundara: How do we know when we are pleasing God?

Srila Prabhupada: When we see Him. Then you will understand. Just as, when you eat, you do not require to ask anyone whether you are feeling strength or your hunger is satisfied. If you eat, you understand that you are feeling energy. You don't need to inquire from anyone. Similarly. if you actually serve God, then you will understand, "God is dictating to me. God is there. I am seeing God."
A devotee: Or God's representative.
Srila Prabhupada: Yes.
Devotee: It comes easier.
Srila Prabhupada: You have to go through God's representative.
yasya prasadad bhagavat-prasadah
"By the mercy of the spiritual master one is benedicted by the mercy of Krsna." If you please God's representative, then automatically God becomes pleased, and thus you can directly see Him.
An Indian gentleman: How to please God's representative?
Srila Prabhupada: You have to carry out his orders, that's all. God's representative is the guru. He asks you to do this, to do that--if you do that, that is pleasing.
yasyaprasadan na gatih kuto 'pi
"Without the grace of the spiritual master one cannot make any advancement." If you displease him, then you are nowhere. Therefore we worship the guru.
saksad-dharitvena samasta-sastrair
uktas tatha bhavyata eva sadbhih
kintu prabhor yah priya eva tasya
vanda guroh sri-caranaravindam
["The spiritual master is to be honored as much as the Supreme Lord because of his being the most confidential servitor of the Lord. This is acknowledged by all revealed scriptures and is followed by all authorities. Therefore I offer my respectful obeisances unto the lotus feet of such a spiritual master, who is a bona fide representative of Lord Krsna."] The guru should be accepted as God. That is the injunction of all sastra.
Bob: The guru should be accepted as a representative of God?
Srila Prabhupada: Yes, the guru is God's representative. The guru is the external manifestation of Krsna.
Bob: But different from the incarnations of Krsna that come?
Srila Prabhupada: Yes.
Bob: In what way is the external manifestation of the guru different from the external manifestation of, let us say, Krsna or Caitanya when They come to earth?
Srila Prabhupada: The guru is the representative of Krsna. So there are symptoms of who is a guru. The general symptoms are described in the Vedas.
tad-vij-nanartham sa gurum evabhigacchet
samit-panih srotriyam brahma-nistham
A guru must come in a disciplic succession, and he must have heard thoroughly about the Vedas from his spiritual master. Generally a guru's symptom is that he is a perfect devotee, that's all. And he serves Krsna by preaching His message.
Bob: Lord Caitanya--He was a different type of guru than you are?
Srila Prabhupada: No, no. Gurus cannot be of different types. All gurus are of one type.
Bob: But He was--was He also an incarnation at the same time?
Srila Prabhupada: Yes, He is Krsna Himself, but He is representing the

guru.
Bob: I... I see.
Srila Prabhupada: Yes.
Bob: And then...
Srila Prabhupada: Because Krsna was God, He demanded:
sarva-dharman parityaj-ya
mam ekam saranam vraja
"Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me." But people misunderstood Him. Therefore Krsna again came as a guru and taught people how to surrender to Krsna.
Syamasundara: Doesn't He say in Bhagavad-gita, "I am the spiritual master"?
Srila Prabhupada: Yes, He is the original spiritual master because He was accepted as spiritual master by Arjuna. So what is the difficulty? Sisyas te 'ham sadhi mam tvam prapannam. Arjuna told the Lord, "I am Your disciple, and a soul surrendered unto You. Please instruct me." So unless He is a spiritual master how does Arjuna become His disciple? He is the original guru. Tene brahma hrda ya adi-kavaye: "It is He only who first imparted Vedic knowledge unto the heart of Brahma, the first created being." Therefore He is the original guru.
Bob: Krsna.
Srila Prabhupada: Yes. He is the original guru. Then His disciple Brahma is a guru, then his disciple Narada is a guru, then his disciple Vyasa is a guru--in this way there is a guru-parampara [disciplic succession of gurus]. Evam parampara--praptam: the transcendental knowledge is received through the disciplic succession.
Bob: So a guru receives his knowledge through the disciplic succession, not directly from Krsna? Do you receive some knowledge directly from Krsna?
Srila Prabhupada: Yes. Krsna's direct instruction is there: Bhagavadgita.
Bob: I see, but...
Srila Prabhupada: But you have to learn it through the disciplic succession, otherwise you will misunderstand it.
Bob: But presently you do not receive information directly from Krsna? It comes through the disciplic succession from the books?
Srila Prabhupada: There is no difference. Suppose I say that this is a pencil. If you say to him, "There is a pencil," and if he says to another man, "This is a pencil," then what is the difference between his instruction and my instructions?
Bob: Krsna's mercy allows you to know this now?
Srila Prabhupada: You can take Krsna's mercy also, provided it is delivered as it is. Just as we are teaching Bhagavad-gita In Bhagavadgita Krsna says:
sarva-dharman parityajya
nam ekam saranam vraja
"Just give up all other forms of religion and simply surrender unto Me." Now we are saying that you should give up everything and surrender to Krsna. Therefore, there is no difference between Krsna's instruction and our instruction. There is no deviation. So if you receive knowledge in that perfect way, that is as good as receiving instruction directly from Krsna. But we don't change anything.
Bob: When I pray reverently, faithfully, does Krsna hear me?
Srila Prabhupada: Yes.
Bob: From me to Him?
Srila Prabhupada: Yes, because He is within your heat He is always

hearing you--whether you are praying or not praying. When you are doing some nonsense, He is also hearing you. And when you pray, that is very good--welcome.
Bob: To Krsna's ear, is praying louder than nonsense?
Srila Prabhupada: No. He is all-perfect. He can hear everything. Even if you don't speak, even if you simply think, "I shall do it," then He hears you. Sarvasya caham hrdi sannivistah: Krsna is seated in everyone's heart.
Bob: But one should pray--is that so?
Srila Prabhupada: That is his business--praying.
Bob: Whose business?
Srila Prabhupada: Every living entity's. That is the only business. Eko bahunam yo vidadhati kaman. That is the statement of the Vedas.
Bob: What does that mean?
Srila Prabhupada: He supplies everything to everyone. He is supplying food to everyone. So He is the Father. So why should you not pray, "Father, give me this"? Just as in the Christian Bible there is, "Father, give us our daily bread." That is good--they are accepting the Supreme Father. But grown-up children should not ask from the father; rather, they should be prepared to serve the father. That is bhakti [devotion].
Bob: My questions you solve so nicely. [Everyone laughs with affection.]
Srila Prabhupada: Thank you very much.
Bob: So, should I ask you another question now?
Srila Prabhupada: Oh, yes. Yes!

Chapter Four
The Three Modes Of Nature

Bob: I have read that there are three gunas--passion, ignorance and goodness--in life. I was wishing that you would explain this somewhat, especially what is meant by the mode of ignorance and the mode of goodness.
Srila Prabhupada: In goodness you can understand things--knowledge. You can know that there is God, that this world was created by Him, and so many things, actual things--the sun is this, the moon is this--perfect knowledge. If one has some knowledge, even though it may not be perfect, that is goodness. And in passion one identifies with his material body and tries to gratify his senses. That is passion. And ignorance is animal life--in ignorance, one does not know what is God, how to become happy, why we are in this world. For example, if you take an animal to the slaughterhouse, it will go. This is ignorance. But a man will protest. If a goat is to be killed after five minutes but you give it a morsel of grass, it is happy because it is eating. Just like a child--even if you are planning to kill her or kill him, he is happy and laughs because he is innocent. That is ignorance.
Bob: Being in these modes determines your karma. Is that correct?
Srila Prabhupada: Yes. According to the association of the modes of nature, your activities are being contaminated.

karanam guna-sango 'sya
sad-asad-yoni-janmasu

A man gets a higher birth or lower birth according to the association of the gunas, or the modes of nature.
Bob: So cheating and like that--what mode is that?
Srila Prabhupada: Cheating is mixed passion and ignorance. Suppose one man cheats another. That means he wants to obtain something; he is passionate. But if he commits murder, he does not know that he will have

to suffer for it, so it is a mixture of passion and ignorance.
Bob: And what about when somebody helps another person?
Srila Prabhupada: That is goodness.
Bob: Why is that goodness? What intelligence is that? I mean--this represents knowledge of what? You said that goodness is when you have knowledge.
Srila Prabhupada: Yes.
Bob: Intelligence.
Srila Prabhupada: Yes.
Bob: So helping another person?
Srila Prabhupada: That means that he is ignorant and you are trying to enlighten him.
Bob: So giving intelligence...
Srila Prabhupada: Yes, that is goodness.
Bob: And what about just giving assistance?
Srila Prabhupada: That is also goodness.
Bob: If a beggar has nothing and you give him alms...
Srila Prabhupada: So that may still be goodness. But in your Bowery Street, they give some charity, and immediately he purchases one bottle of wine and drinks and lies down flat. [All laugh.] So that is charity. But that is not goodness; that is ignorance.
Bob: Charity is ignorance?
Srila Prabhupada: There are three kinds of charities--good, passionate and ignorant. Goodness is giving charity where charity must be given. Just like this Krsna consciousness movement--if anyone gives charity to this movement, that is goodness because it is spreading God consciousness, Krsna consciousness. That is goodness. And if one gives charity for some return, that is passion. And if somebody gives in charity in an improper place and time, without respect and to an unworthy person, just like the Bowery man, that is ignorance. But Krsna says:
yat karosi yad asnasi
yaj juhosi dadasi yat
"All that you do, all that you eat, all that you offer and give away, as well as all austerities that you may perform, should be done as an offering unto Me." If Krsna takes, that is the perfection of charity. Or anyone who is a representative of Krsna--if he takes, that is perfection.
Bob: And what kind of charity is it when you give food to somebody who is hungry?
Srila Prabhupada: Well, that depends on the circumstances. For example, a doctor has forbidden his patient to take any solid food, and if the patient is asking, "Give me some solids," and if you give him solid food in charity, then you are not doing good to him. That is ignorance.
Bob: Are the devotees beyond accumulating karma? These devotees--do they feel karma? Do they work in these modes? Are they in the mode of goodness?
Srila Prabhupada: They are above goodness! Suddha-sattva. The devotees are not in this material world. They are in the spiritual world. That is stated in the Bhagavad-gita:
mam ca yo 'vyabhicarena
bhakti-yogena sevate
sa gunan samatityaitan
brahma-bhuyaya kalpate
["One who engages in full devotional service, who does not fall

down in any circumstances, at once transcends the modes of material nature and thus comes to the level of Brahman."] Devotees are neither in goodness, passion nor ignorance. They are transcendental to all these qualities.
Bob: A devotee who is very faithful reaches this stage?
Srila Prabhupada: Yes. Devotee... You can become a devotee as they have become. It is not difficult. Simply you have to engage yourself in the transcendental loving service of the Lord, that's all.
Bob: I wish to gain more knowledge of God and be able to feel God's presence more. The reason for this is because I feel life has little meaning without this.
Srila Prabhupada: Yes! If you miss this human form of life, then it is a great loss. That is a great chance given to the living entity to get out of the entanglement of material existence.
Bob: I feel thankful that I've been able to ask these questions...
Srila Prabhupada: Yes, you can learn more and more.
Bob: But I still have... my connections at home. Marriage is... I am engaged....
Srila Prabhupada: No, no. There are so many marriages. [He indicates Syamasundara.] He is married. Marriage is no barrier. I told you that there are four different orders of spiritual life--brahmacari, grhastha, vanaprastha and sannyasa. So after brahmacari life, one can marry. That is not obligatory. One may remain naistika-brahmacari for his whole life. But a brahmacari can marry. And after marriage, there is vanaprastha life. This means that one is a little aloof from family--the husband and wife live separately. At that time there is no sex life. Then when he is fully renounced, detached from family life, he takes sannyasa,
Bob: Does somebody forget his wife completely then?
Srila Prabhupada: Yes. Forgetting is not very difficult, if you try to forget. Out of sight, out of mind. [All laugh.] Just as I have my wife, children, grandchildren--everything. But, out of sight, out of mind, that's all. Therefore, vanaprastha, sannyasa--everything is nicely arranged by the Vedic system.
Chapter Five
Becoming Pure
Bob: Thank you so much for allowing me to ask my questions.
Srila Prabhupada: That is my mission. People should understand the science of God. Unless we cooperate with the Supreme Lord, our life is baffled. I have given the example many times that a screw which has fallen from a machine has no value. But when the same screw is again attached to the machine, it has value. Similarly, we are part and parcel of God. So without God, what is our value? No value! We should again come back to our position of attachment to God. Then we have value.
Bob: I met a fellow today who came in the afternoon. His reason for coming--you may find it humorous--was that he heard the hippies were in Mayapur.
Srila Prabhupada: What?
Bob: He heard that hippies were in Mayapur. I was talking to him, and then some devotees were talking to him. He had said some things to me which I could find no answer for. And he said he would come back tomorrow and meet some devotees. But let me tell you what he said. This is confusing. When he was young--
Srila Prabhupada: He's Indian?
Bob: Yes, Indian. He lives nearby and speaks English fairly well. When

he was young he worshiped Kali [a popular demigoddess] every day very rigorously, and then the floods came. When the floods came, the people saw hardship, and now he has no religion, and he says he finds his happiness in trying to develop love among people. And I couldn't think of what to say to him to add God and religion to his life. He says that after he dies, "maybe I'll become part of God, maybe not," but he can't worry about it now. He says he's tried these religious experiences, but they didn't work. One reason I ask this is because when I go back to America, a lot of people I come across are like this. They see that religion, like his worship of Kali or other kinds of religion they've experienced, doesn't work. And I don't know what to say to them to convince them it's worth trying.
Srila Prabhupada: Do not try at the present moment. You try to be convinced yourself.
Bob: Yes. I asked him to see devotees, but then on the way out, as he was leaving down the road, I met him again and told him, "Come back," but... Oh, I see.
Srila Prabhupada: You first of all be convinced. And then try to convince others. Caitanya Mahaprabhu's instruction is that you can improve the welfare of others when your own life is a success:
bharata-bhumite haila manusya -janma yara
janma sarthaka kari 'kara para-upakara
First make your life perfect. Then try to teach others.
Bob: The devotees have told me that without consciousness of Krsna all the time, you cannot be happy. But at times I feel happy.
Srila Prabhupada: At times. Not always.
Bob: Yes.
Srila Prabhupada: But if you become Krsna conscious, you will feel happy always.
Bob: They had implied that you cannot feel happy without Krsna consciousness.
Srila Prabhupada: That is a fact. For example, if you are an animal of the land and you are thrown into the water, you cannot be happy in water in any condition. When you are again taken up a the land, then you'll be happy. Similarly, we are part and parcel of Krsna. We cannot be happy without being part and parcel of Krsna. The same example: the machine part, without the machine, has no value, but when it is again put into the machine it has value. We are part of Krsna; we must join Krsna. And you can join Krsna immediately by your consciousness, simply by thinking, "I am Krsna's, Krsna is mine:' That's all.
Bob: What is that? Krsna is...
Srila Prabhupada: Krsna is mine.
Bob: Mine?
Srila Prabhupada: Yes. Mine. My Krsna.
Bob: Ah.
Srila Prabhupada: Krsna is mine. Krsna is mine.
Bob: Yes.
Srila Prabhupada: And I am Krsna's. That is our actual position.
Bob: We are part of Krsna.
Srila Prabhupada: Yes. Everything is part and parcel of Krsna. Because everything is generated by the energy of Krsna and everything is the energy of Krsna.
An Indian gentleman: Srila Prabhupada, I have one question. What is the status of service minus devotion?
Srila Prabhupada: Hm-m? That is not service, that is business. [Everyone

laughs.] For example, here in Mayapur we have employed a contractor. That is not service--that is business. Is it not? Sometimes they will advertise, "Our customers are our masters." Is it not? But in spite of the flowery language--"Our customers are our masters"--this is business, because nobody is a qualified customer unless he pays. But service is not like that. Service--Caitanya Mahaprabhu prays to Krsna:
yatha tatha va vidadhatu lampato
mat-prana-nathas tu sa eva naparah
"You do whatever You like, but still You are my worshipable Lord." That is service. "I don't ask any return from You." That is service. When you expect some return, that is business.
Bob: I wish to ask you to advise me on how I can come to feel closer to God. I'll be leaving you soon. And I'm--
Srila Prabhupada: You have to be purified.
Bob: I come to the temple at times, and then I leave, and I'm not sure how much I take with me.
Srila Prabhupada: It does not take much time. Within six months you will realize your progress. But you have to follow the regulative principles. Then it will be all right. Just like these boys and girls are doing.
Bob: Yes, I see.
Srila Prabhupada: They have no tendency for going to the cinema or going to a hotel. No. They have stopped all anarthas, all unnecessary things.
Bob: I--I feel that when I go back, they'll--
Srila Prabhupada: The whole human life is meant for purification.
Bob: Yes.
Srila Prabhupada:
tapo divyam putraka yena sattvam
suddhyed yasmad brahma-saukhyam tv anantam
Sattva means existence. So if you don't purify your existence, then you will have to change your body. From this body to that. Sometimes it may be higher, sometimes lower. For example, if you don't cure a disease, it can put you into trouble in so many ways. Similarly. if you don't purify your existence, then you will have to transmigrate from one body to another. There are very subtle laws of nature. Now there is no guarantee that you will get a very comfortable body or an American body. Therefore, it is essential for the human being to purify his existence. Unless you purify your existence, you will hanker after happiness but will not always be happy.
Bob: When I go to my job in New York, I hope I'll become pure, but I'm sure that I won't become as pure as your devotees here. I--I don't see myself doing that.
Srila Prabhupada: You can do as they are doing. They were not pure in the beginning; now they are pure. Similarly. you can become pure. For example, in your childhood you were not educated--but now you are educated.
Bob: So, what are the things that I may do? When I go back, I must--
Srila Prabhupada: When do you go back?
Bob: I'll be going back to Chaibasa to do my work there, and...
Srila Prabhupada: What is there in Chaibasa?
Bob: That is where I do my teaching. I live there.
want to see everyone happy. Sarve sukhino bhavantu. People do not know how to become happy. They do not take the standard path to become happy. They manufacture their own way. That is the difficulty. Therefore, Rsabhadeva gave this advice to his sons: "My dear boys, just undergo austerity for transcendental realization." Everyone is performing

austerity. This boy I know--he had to go to a foreign country to learn commercial management. Now he is well situated. In this way. everyone must undergo some austerity for future life. So why not take that austerity for permanent happiness? You have to purify your existence and your body. As many times as you accept a material body, you will have to change it. But as soon as you get a spiritual body, there is no question of change. You already have a spiritual body. Now, due to our material contamination, we are developing the material body. But if we associate with spiritual life, then we shall develop a spiritual body. The same example I have several times given is that if you put an iron rod within fire, it will become like fire. Is it not?
Bob: Put the iron rod into fire?
Srila Prabhupada: Yes, and it will become like fire.
Bob: Yes.
Srila Prabhupada: Although iron.
Bob: Yes.
Srila Prabhupada: Similarly, if you always keep yourself spiritually engaged, your body will act spiritually, although it is material. The same example: when an iron rod is red-hot, touch it anywhere, and it will burn. It takes on the quality of fire. Similarly, if you always keep yourself in Krsna consciousness, then you will become spiritualized. You will act spiritually. No more material demands.
Bob: How do I do this?
Srila Prabhupada: This process. They are doing it. You have seen these boys, our six boys who have been initiated today. It is very simple. You have to follow the four restrictive regulations and chant these beads. Very easy.
Bob: Well, but, see--when I am back in Bihar and following my lifestyle there, I--if I follow all these regulative principles--some I follow now, but not all--
Srila Prabhupada: "Some" means... ?
Bob: "Some"?
Srila Prabhupada: There are only four regulative principles. "Some" means three, or two?
Bob: Two or three.
Srila Prabhupada: So why not the other one?
Bob: No, no. I mean I follow one or two. One or two I follow now.
Srila Prabhupada: [Laughs.] Why not the other three? What is the difficulty? Which one do you follow?
Bob: Which one do I follow? Well, I'm almost vegetarian, but I eat eggs.
Srila Prabhupada: Then that is also not complete.
Bob: No, not even complete. Since last time [November], I've become vegetarian, but...
Srila Prabhupada: Vegetarian is no qualification.
Bob: Not much.
Srila Prabhupada: The pigeon is vegetarian. The monkey is vegetarian--the most rubbish creature...
Bob: Well...
Srila Prabhupada: The monkey is vegetarian. This naked sannyasi lives in the forest... the most mischievous...
Bob: I--I felt that it was a little bit of progress because it was somewhat difficult at first, then easy, and I had returned to--
Srila Prabhupada: No, you can stick to all the regulative principles, provided you take to the Krsna consciousness process--otherwise it is not possible.

Bob: Yes, this is it. I have--when I'm back in Bihar, and--um--my friends may say... We're sitting in the evening, and there's nothing to do but fight mosquitoes, and they say, "How about smoking some marijuana?" And I say, "Sure, there's nothing else to do;" and then I sit down, and I enjoy myself for the evening. Now we did this, we got carried away. we were doing it every day and realizing we were hurting ourselves and stopped, but still on occasion we...
Srila Prabhupada: You have to live with us. Then your friends will not ask you, "What about marijuana?" [Bob laughs.] Keep the association of devotees. We are opening centers to give people a chance to associate with us. Why have we taken so much land [in Mayapur]? Those who are seriously desirous--they will come and live with us. Association is very influential. If you associate with drunkards, you become drunk; if you associate with sadhus, then you become a sadhu. Syamasundara: He can come and stay with you in Bombay.
Srila Prabhupada: Yes, you can stay with us in Bombay. But he wants friends with marijuana. That is the difficulty.
Bob: Let me ask you about something else; then maybe I'll come back to this. I find that I think of myself too much, and this way I can't think of God so much. I think of myself in too many places. How can I forget about myself so I can concentrate on other, more important things?
Srila Prabhupada: As they [the devotees] have done.
Bob: [Laughs.] You are saying to me that my path--I think what you're saying is that my path to purity is to become a devotee.
Srila Prabhupada: Do you hesitate?
Bob: Well, I...
Srila Prabhupada: Is it very difficult to become a devotee?
Bob: For myself--it is. I--I don't feel so much the desire. First the devotees tell me that they have given up material life. These four regulative principles, they have explained to me, mean giving up material life, and that I see. And in place of this they have...
Srila Prabhupada: What do you mean by material life? [Bob is silent] I am sitting on this bed. Is it material or spiritual?
Bob: Material.
Srila Prabhupada: Then how have we given up material life?
Bob: I think how I interpreted it was "a desire for our material gains..."
Srila Prabhupada: What is material?
Bob: Working towards material gains and not giving up all materials.
Srila Prabhupada: Material life means--when you desire to gratify your senses, that is material life. And when you desire to serve God, that is spiritual life. That is the difference between material life and spiritual life. Now we are trying to serve our senses. But instead of serving the senses, when we serve God, that is spiritual life. What is the difference between our activities and others, activities? We are using everything--table, chair, bed, tape recorder, typewriter--so what is the difference? The difference is that we are using everything for Krsna.
Bob: The devotees have said that the sensual pleasures they have given up are replaced with spiritual kinds of pleasures, but--see--I haven't felt this.
Srila Prabhupada: Spiritual pleasures come when you desire to please Krsna. That is spiritual pleasure. For example, a mother is more pleased by feeding her son. She's not eating, but when she sees that her son is eating very nicely, then she becomes pleased.

Bob: Hmm-m. Spiritual pleasure, then, is pleasing God.
Srila Prabhupada: Spiritual pleasure means the pleasure of Krsna.
Bob: Pleasing Krsna.
Srila Prabhupada: Yes. Material pleasure means the Pleasure of the senses. That's all. This is the difference. When you simply try to please Krsna, that is spiritual pleasure.
Bob: I had viewed this as--my thought of pleasing God was to--
Srila Prabhupada: Don't manufacture your ways of Pleasing God. Don't manufacture. Suppose I want to please you. Then I shall ask you, "How can I serve you?" Not that I manufacture some service. That is not pleasing. Suppose I want a glass of water. If you concoct the idea, "Svamiji will be more pleased if I give him a glass of milk, hot milk," that will not please me. If you want to please me, then you should ask me, "How can I Please you?" And if you do what I order, that will please me.
Bob: And pleasing Krsna, then, is being a devotee of Krsna.
Srila Prabhupada: A devotee is one who is always pleasing Krsna. He has no other business. That is a devotee.
Bob: Can you tell me some more about chanting Hare Krsna? I have for quite some time chanted, but never regularly--just a little bit here and there. I just got beads very recently, and once in a while I feel comfortable chanting, and once in a while not comfortable at all. Maybe I don't chant Properly. I don't know.
Srila Prabhupada: Yes, everything has a process. You have to adopt the process.
Bob: The devotees tell me of the ecstasy they feel when chanting.
Srila Prabhupada: Yes, the more you become purified, the more you will feel ecstasy. This chanting process is the purifying process.
“Perfect Questions - Perfect Answers” Conversations between His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada and Bob Cohen, a Peace Corps worker in India.
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Chapter Six
The Perfect Devotee
Syamasundara: Srila Prabhupada, this afternoon we were discussing austerities.
Srila Prabhupada: Mm?
Syamasundara: If we don't practice austerities voluntarily, then we must

involuntarily practice some austerities.
Srila Prabhupada: Yes, under the direction of the spiritual master one should... You have no mind to follow austerities, but when you accept a spiritual master, you have to carry out his order. That is austerity.
Syamasundara: Even if you don't want to practice austerity, you must.
Srila Prabhupada: Yes, you must. Because you have surrendered to your spiritual master, his order is final. So even if you don't like it, you have to do it. To please me.
Syamasundara: Ah.
Srila Prabhupada: But you don't like... [He laughs.] Nobody likes to fast, but the spiritual master says, "Today, fasting," so what can be done? [Syamasundara laughs.] A disciple is one who has voluntarily agreed to be disciplined by the spiritual master. That is austerity.
Syamasundara: Say, like our parents or many people in the material world, completely enamored by the material life--they don't want to undergo austerity or bodily pain, but still they must. They are being forced by nature to suffer austerities.
Srila Prabhupada: That is forced austerity. That is not good. Voluntary austerity will help.
Syamasundara: If you don't undergo voluntary austerity, then you must be forced to undergo austerity.
Srila Prabhupada: That is the difference between man and animal. An animal cannot accept austerity. But a man can accept it. There is a nice foodstuff in the confectioner's shop, so a man wants to eat it, but he sees that he has no money, so he can restrain himself. But when a cow comes, immediately she pushes her mouth in. You can beat her with a stick, but she will tolerate it. She will do that. Therefore an animal cannot undergo austerity. Our austerity is very nice. We chant Hare Krsna, dance, and Krsna sends very nice foodstuffs, and we eat. That's all. Why are your people not agreeable to such austerity? Chanting, dancing and eating nicely?
Bob: What is that?
Srila Prabhupada: Because we are following austerities, Krsna sends us nice things. So we are not losers. When you become Krsna-ized, then you get more comforts than at the present moment. That's a fact. I have been living alone for the last twenty years, but I have no difficulties. Before taking sannyasa I was living in Delhi. So I had no difficulties, although I was living alone.
Syamasundara: If you don't accept spiritual discipline, then nature will force so many calamities.
Srila Prabhupada: Oh, yes. That is stated in the Bhagavad-gita:
daivi hy esa gunamayi
mama maya daratyaya
mam eva ye prapadyante
mayam etam taranti te
["This divine energy of Mine, consisting of the three modes of material nature, is difficult to overcome. But those who have surrendered unto Me can easily cross beyond it."] Maya is imposing so many difficulties, but as soon as you surrender to Krsna, no more imposition.
Syamasundara: We were so foolish that we were always thinking, "In the future I'll be happy."
Srila Prabhupada: Yes, that is maya, illusion. That is like the ass. You sit down on the back of the ass and just take a morsel of grass. The ass is thinking, "Let me go forward a little, and I shall get the grass."

[Bob laughs.] But it is always one foot distant. That is ass-ism. [They all laugh.] Everyone is thinking, "Let me go a little forward, and I'll get it. I'll be very happy."
Bob: I... I thank you so much for...
Srila Prabhupada: Hmm?
Bob: Tomorrow I'll have to leave you and--
Srila Prabhupada: Don't talk l-e-a-v-e, but talk l-i-v-e.
Bob: I cannot yet, but I was thinking now of returning tomorrow to my town. But...
Srila Prabhupada: Don't return.
Bob: I should stay here tomorrow--here?
Srila Prabhupada: Stay here.
Bob: You tell me to, I'll stay.
Srila Prabhupada: Yes, you are a very good boy. [There is a long pause. It is now, much quieter.] It is very simple. When the living entities forget Krsna, they are in this material world. Krsna means His name, His form, His abode, His pastimes--everything.
Bob: What was that last?
Srila Prabhupada: Ah? Pastimes.
Bob: Pastimes.
Srila Prabhupada: When we speak of a king, it means the king's government, king's palace, king's queen, king's sons, secretaries, military strength--everything. Is it not?
Bob: Yes.
Srila Prabhupada: Similarly, Krsna being the Supreme Personality of Godhead, as soon as we think of Krsna, this means all the energies of Krsna. That is complete by saying, "Radha-Krsna." Radha represents all the energy of Krsna. And Krsna is the Supreme Lord. So when we speak of Krsna, the living entities are also included because the living entities are energies, different energies of Krsna--superior energy. So when this energy is not serving the energetic, that is material existence. The whole world is not serving Krsna. They are serving Krsna in a different way. They are serving indirectly, just as disobedient citizens serve the government indirectly. Prisoners come to the prison house on account of their disobedience of the laws of the state. So, in the prison house, they are forced to obey the laws of the state. Similarly. all the living entities here are godless, either by ignorance or by choice. They do not like to accept the supremacy of God. Demoniac. So we are trying to bring them to their original condition. That is the Krsna consciousness movement.
Bob: I'd like to ask you just something I talked with devotees about--medicine. I walked to the river with some devotees today. I have a cold, so I said I shouldn't go in the water. Some felt I should because it is the Ganges, and some said I shouldn't because I have a cold, and we were talking, and I don't understand. Do we get sick because of our bad actions in the past?
Srila Prabhupada: Yes, that's a fact.
Bob: But when one...
Srila Prabhupada: Any kind of distress we suffer is due to our impious activities in the past.
Bob: But when someone is removed from karmic influence...
Srila Prabhupada: Yes?
Bob: ... does he still get sick?
Srila Prabhupada: No. Even if he gets sick, that is very temporary. For instance, this fan is moving. If you disconnect the electric power, then

the fan will move for a moment. That movement is not due to the electric current. That is force--what is it called, physically, this force?
Syamasundara: Momentum.
Srila Prabhupada: Momentum. But as soon as it stops, no more movement. Similarly, even if a devotee who has surrendered to Krsna is suffering from material consequences, that is temporary. Therefore, a devotee does not take any material miseries as miseries. He takes them as Krsna's, God's, mercy.
Bob: A perfected soul, a devotee, a pure devotee...
Srila Prabhupada: A perfected soul is one who engages twenty-four hours a day in Krsna consciousness. That is perfection. That is a transcendental position. Perfection means to engage in one's original consciousness. That is perfection. That is stated in Bhagavad-gita:
sve sve karmany abhiratah
samsiddhim labhate narah
"By following his qualities of work, every man can become perfect." Complete perfection. Samsiddhi. Siddhi is perfection. That is Brahman realization, spiritual realization. And samsiddhi means devotion, which comes after Brahman realization.
Bob: Could you just say that last thing again please?
Srila Prabhupada: Samsiddhi.
Bob: Yes.
Srila Prabhupada: Sam means complete.
Bob: Yes.
Srila Prabhupada: And siddhi means perfection. In the Bhagavad-gita it is stated that one who goes back home, back to Godhead, has attained the complete perfection. So perfection comes when one realizes that he is not this body; he is spirit soul. Brahma-bhuta--that is called Brahman realization. That is perfection. And samsiddhi comes after Brahman realization, when one engages in devotional service. Therefore if one is already engaged in devotional service, it is to be understood that Brahman realization is there. Therefore it is called samsiddhi.
Bob: I ask you this very humbly, but do you feel diseases and sickness?
Srila Prabhupada: Hm-m?
Bob: Do you personally feel disease and sickness?
Srila Prabhupada: Yes.
Bob: Is this a result of your past karma?
Srila Prabhupada: Yes.
Bob: So one in this material world never escapes his karma completely?
Srila Prabhupada: Yes, he escapes. No more karma for a devotee. No more karmic reaction.
Bob: But you must be the best devotee.
Srila Prabhupada: Hm-m... No, I don't consider myself the best devotee. I am the lowest.
Bob: No!
Srila Prabhupada: You are the best devotee.
Bob: [Laughs.] Oh, no, no! But, see, you say--what you say... always seems right.
Srila Prabhupada: Yes.
Bob: Then you must be the best devotee.
Srila Prabhupada: The thing is that even the best devotee, when he preaches, comes to the second-class platform of a devotee.
Bob: What would the best devotee be doing?
Srila Prabhupada: The best devotee does not preach.
Bob: What does he do?

Srila Prabhupada: He sees that there is no need of preaching. For him, everyone is a devotee. [Bob laughs heartily] Yes, he sees no more nondevotees--all devotees. He is called an utama-adhikari. But while I am preaching, how can I say I am the best devotee? Just like Radharani--She does not see anyone as a nondevotee. Therefore we try to approach Radharani.
Bob: Who is this?
Srila Prabhupada: Radharani, Krsna's consort.
Bob: Ah.
Srila Prabhupada: If anyone approaches Radharani, She recommends to Krsna, "Here is the best devotee. He is better than Me," and Krsna cannot refuse him. That is the best devotee. But it is not to be imitated: "I have become the best devotee."
isvare tad-adhinesu
balisesu dvisatsu ca
prema-maitri-krpepeksa
yah karoti sa madhyamah
(SB. 11.2.46)
A second-class devotee has the vision that some are envious of God, but this is not the vision of the best devotee. The best devotee sees, "Nobody is envious of God. Everyone is better than me." Just like Caitanya-caritamrta's author, Krsnadasa Kaviraja. He says, "I am lower than the worm in the stool."
Bob: Who is saying this?
Srila Prabhupada: Krsnadasa Kaviraja, the author of Caitanya-caritamrta: purisera kita haite muni se laghistha. He is not making a show. He is feeling like that. "I am the lowest. Everyone is best, but I am the lowest. Everyone is engaged in Krsna's service. I am not engaged." Caitanya Mahaprabhu said "Oh, I have not a pinch of devotion to Krsna. I cry to make a show. If I had been a devotee of Krsna, I would have died long ago. But I am living. That is the proof that I do not love Krsna." That is the vision of the best devotee. He is so much absorbed in Krsna's love that he says, "Everything is going on, but I am the lowest. Therefore I cannot see God." That is the best devotee.
Bob: So a devotee must work for everybody's liberation?
Srila Prabhupada: Yes. A devotee must work under the direction of a bona fide spiritual master, not imitate the best devotee.
Bob: Excuse me?
Srila Prabhupada: One should not imitate the best devotee.
Bob: Imitate. Oh. I see.
Syamasundara: One time you said that sometimes you feel sickness or pain due to the sinful activities of your devotees. Can sometimes disease be due to that? Caused by that?
Srila Prabhupada: You see, Krsna says:
aham tvam sarva-papebhyo
moksayisyami ma sucah
"I will deliver you from all sinful reaction. Do not fear." So Krsna is so powerful that He can immediately take up all the sins of others and immediately make them right. But when a living entity plays the part on behalf of Krsna, he also takes the responsibility for the sinful activities of his devotees. Therefore to become a guru is not an easy task. You see? He has to take all the poisons and absorb them. So sometimes--because he is not Krsna--sometimes there is some trouble. Therefore Caitanya Mahaprabhu has forbidden, "Don't make many sisyas, many disciples." But for preaching work we have to accept many

disciples--for expanding preaching--even if we suffer. That's a fact. The spiritual master has to take the responsibility for all the sinful activities of his disciples. Therefore to make many disciples is a risky job unless one is able to assimilate all the sins.

vancha-kalpa-tarubhyas ca
kipa-sindhubhya eva ca
patitanam pavanebhyo
vaisnavebhyo namo namah

["I offer my respectful obeisances unto all the Vaisnava devotees of the Lord. They are just like desire trees who can fulfill the desires of everyone, and they are full of compassion for the fallen conditioned souls."] He takes responsibility for all the fallen souls. That idea is also in the Bible. Jesus Christ took all the sinful reactions of the people and sacrificed his life. That is the responsibility of a spiritual master. Because Krsna is Krsna, He is apapa-viddha--He cannot be attacked by sinful reactions. But a living entity is sometimes subjected to their influence because he is so small. Big fire, small fire. If you put some big thing in a small fire, the fire itself may be extinguished. But in a big fire, whatever you put in is all right. The big fire can consume anything.

Bob: Christ's suffering was of that nature?

Srila Prabhupada: Mm-m?

Bob: Was Christ's suffering--

Srila Prabhupada: That I have already explained. He took the sinful reactions of all the people. Therefore he suffered.

Bob: I see.

Srila Prabhupada: He said--that is in the Bible--that he took all the sinful reactions of the people and sacrificed his life. But these Christian people have made it a law for Christ to suffer while they do all nonsense. [Bob gives a short laugh.] Such great fools they are! They have let Jesus Christ make a contract for taking all their sinful reactions so they can go on with all nonsense. That is their religion. Christ was so magnanimous that he took all their sins and suffered, but that does not induce them to stop all these sins. They have not come to that sense. They have taken it very easily. "Let Lord Jesus Christ suffer, and we'll do all nonsense." Is it not?

Bob: It is so.

Srila Prabhupada: They should have been ashamed: "Lord Jesus Christ suffered for us, but we are continuing the sinful activities." He told everyone, "Thou shalt not kill," but they are indulging in killing, thinking, "Lord Jesus Christ will excuse us and take all the sinful reactions." This is going on. We should be very much cautious: "For my sinful actions my spiritual master will suffer, so I'll not commit even a pinch of sinful activities." That is the duty of the disciple. After initiation, all sinful reaction is finished. Now if he again commits sinful activities, his spiritual master has to suffer. A disciple should be sympathetic and consider this. "For my sinful activities, my spiritual master will suffer." If the spiritual master is attacked by some disease, it is due to the sinful activities of others. "Don't make many disciples." But we do it because we are preaching. Never mind--let us suffer--still we shall accept them. Therefore your question was--when I suffer is it due to my past misdeeds? Was it not? That is my misdeed--that I accepted some disciples who are nonsense. That is my misdeed.

Bob: This happens on occasions?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. This is sure to happen because we are accepting

so many men. It is the duty of the disciples to be cautious. "My spiritual master has saved me. I should not put him again into suffering." When the spiritual master is in suffering, Krsna saves him. Krsna thinks, "Oh, he has taken so much responsibility for delivering a fallen person." So Krsna is there.

kauntea pratijanihi
na me bhaktah pranasyati

["O son of Kunti, declare it boldly that My devotee never perishes."] Because the spiritual master takes the risk on account of Krsna.

Bob: Your suffering is not the same kind of pain...

Srila Prabhupada: No, it is not due to karma. The pain is there sometimes, so that the disciples may know, "Due to our sinful activities, our spiritual master is suffering."

Bob: You look very well now.

Srila Prabhupada: I am always well... in the sense that even if there is suffering, I know Krsna will protect me. But this suffering is not due to my sinful activities.

Bob: But let us say when I--in the town I live in, I take boiled water because some of the water has disease in it. Now, why should I drink boiled water if I have been good enough not to get a disease? Then I may drink any water. And if I have been not acting properly. then I shall get disease anyway.

Srila Prabhupada: So long as you are in the material world, you cannot neglect physical laws. Suppose you go to a jungle and there is a tiger. It is known that it will attack you, so why should you voluntarily go and be attacked? It is not that a devotee should take physical risk so long as he has a physical body. It is not a challenge to the physical laws: "I have become a devotee. I challenge everything." That is foolishness.

anasaktasya visayan
yatharham upayunj-atah
nirbandhah krsna-sambandhe
yuktam vairagyam ucyate

The devotee is advised to accept the necessities of life without attachment. He'll take boiled water, but if boiled water is not available, does it mean he will not drink water? If it is not available, he will drink ordinary water. We take Krsna prasada, but while touring, sometimes we have to take some food in a hotel. Because one is a devotee, should he think, "I will not take any foodstuffs from the hotel. I shall starve"? If I starve, then I will be weak and will not be able to preach.

Bob: Does a devotee lose some of his individuality, in that--

Srila Prabhupada: No, he has full individuality for pleasing Krsna. Krsna says, "You surrender unto Me." So he voluntarily surrenders. It is not that he has lost his individuality. He keeps his individuality. Just like Arjuna--in the beginning, he was declining to fight, on account of his individuality. But when he accepted Krsna as his spiritual master, he became sisya [a disciple]. Then whatever Krsna ordered, he said yes. That doesn't mean he lost his individuality. He voluntarily accepted: "Whatever Krsna says, I shall do it." Just like all my disciples--they have not lost their individuality, but they have surrendered their individuality. That is required. For example, suppose a man does not use sex. It does not mean he has become impotent. If he likes, he can have sex life a thousand times. But he has voluntarily avoided it. Param

drstva nivartate: he has a higher taste. Sometimes we fast, but that does not mean we are diseased. We voluntarily fast. It does not mean that I am not hungry or cannot eat. But we voluntarily fast.
Bob: Does the devotee who surrenders keep his individual taste?
Srila Prabhupada: Yes, in full.
Bob: Taste for different things?
Srila Prabhupada: Hm?
Bob: Does he keep his individual likes and dislikes?
Srila Prabhupada: Yes, he keeps everything. But he gives preference to Krsna. Suppose I like this thing but Krsna says, "No, you cannot use it." Then I shall not use it. It is for Krsna's sake.
nirbandhah krsna-sambandhe
yuktam vairagyam ucyate
Krsna says positively, "I like these things." So we have to offer to Krsna what He likes, and then we'll take prasada. Krsna likes Radharani. Therefore all the gopis, they are trying to push Radharani to Krsna. "Krsna likes this gopi. All right, push Her." That is Krsna consciousness. To satisfy the senses of Krsna, not to satisfy my senses. That is bhakti. That is called prema, love for Krsna. "Ah, Krsna likes this. I must give Him this."
Bob: There is some prasada [food offered to Krsna]. It's offered, and then we go and eat, and different prasadams are served. Some I like, and some I find the taste not at all to my liking.
Srila Prabhupada: You should not do that. The perfection is that whatever is offered to Krsna you should accept. That is perfection. You cannot say. "I like this, I don't like this." So long as you make such discrimination, that means you have not appreciated what prasada is.
A devotee: What if there is someone speaking of likes and dislikes? Say someone is preparing some prasada...
Srila Prabhupada: No disliking, no liking. Whatever Krsna likes, that's all right.
A devotee: Yes. But say someone prepares something,
like some prasada for Krsna, but he does not make it so good, and it is--
Srila Prabhupada: No, if made sincerely with devotion, then Krsna will like it. Just like Vidu. Vidu was feeding Krsna bananas, but he was so absorbed in thought that he was throwing away the real bananas and he was giving Krsna the skin, and Krsna was eating. [All laugh] Krsna knew that he was giving in devotion, and Krsna can eat anything, provided there is devotion. It does not matter whether it is materially tasteful or not. Similarly. a devotee also takes Krsna prasada, whether it is materially tasteful or not. We should accept everything.
A devotee: But if the devotion is not there, like in India...
Srila Prabhupada: If devotion is not there, He doesn't like any food, either tasteful or not tasteful. He does not accept it.
A devotee: In India... Somebody--
Srila Prabhupada: Oh, India, India. Don't talk of India! Talk of philosophy. If there is not devotion, Krsna does not accept anything, either in India or in your country. Lord Krsna is not obliged to accept anything costly because it is very tasty. Krsna has very many tasteful dishes in Vaikuntha. He is not hankering after your food. He accepts your devotion, bhakti. The real thing is devotion, not the food. Krsna does not accept any food of this material world. He accepts only the devotion.
patram puspam phalam toyam

yo me bhaktya prayacchati
tad aham bhakty-upahrtam
asnami prayatatmanah
["If one offers Me with love and devotion a leaf, a flower, fruit or water, I will accept it."] "Because it has been offered to Me with devotion and love"--that is required. Therefore we do not allow anyone to cook who is not a devotee. Krsna does not accept anything from the hands of a nondevotee. Why should He accept? He is not hungry. He does not require any food. He accepts only the devotion, that's all. That is the main point. So one has to become a devotee. Not a good cook. But if he is a devotee, then he will be a good cook also. Automatically he will become a good cook. Therefore one has to become a devotee only. Then all other good qualifications will automatically be there. And if he is a nondevotee, any good qualifications have no value. He is on the mental plane, so he has no good qualification. [There is a long pause in the conversation.]
Srila Prabhupada: And the time?
Syamasundara: Six o'clock.
Srila Prabhupada: Questions and answers are required. They are beneficial to all.
Bob: I still have a question on the prasada.
Srila Prabhupada: Suta Gosvami says:
munayah sadhu prsto 'ham
bhavadbhir loka-mangalam
yat krtah krsna-samprasno
yenatma suprasidati
["O sages, I have been justly questioned by you. Your questions are worthy because they relate to Lord Krsna and so are relevant to the world's welfare. Only questions of this sort are capable of completely satisfying the self."] Krsna-samprasnah, that is very good. When you discuss and hear, that is loka-mangalam, auspicious for everyone. Both the questions and the answers.
Bob: I still do not understand so much about prasada. But if you like I'll think about it and ask you again tomorrow.
Srila Prabhupada: Prasada is always prasada. But because we are not elevated sufficiently, therefore we do not like some prasada.
Bob: I found specifically that what I mean--that some are too spicy, and it hurts my stomach.
Srila Prabhupada: Well... That is also due to not appreciating, but the cook should have consideration. Krsna must be offered first-class foodstuffs. So if he offers something last class, he is not performing his duty. But Krsna can accept anything if it is offered by a devotee, and a devotee can accept any prasada, even if it is spicy. Hiranyakasipu gave his son poison [and the son offered it to Krsna], and the son drank it as nectar. So even if it is spicy to others, taste, it is very palatable to the devotee. What is the question of spicy? He was offered poison, real poison. And Putana Raksasi--she also offered Krsna poison. But Krsna is so nice that He thought, "She took Me as My mother," so He took the poison and delivered her. Krsna does not take the bad side. A good man does not take the bad side--he takes only the good side. Just like one of my big Godbrothers--he wanted to make business with my Guru Maharaja [spiritual master], but my Guru Maharaja did not take the bad side. He took the good side. He thought, "He has come forward to give me some service."
Bob: Business with your--what was that? Business with who?

Srila Prabhupada: I am talking about my Guru Maharaja.
Bob: Oh, I see. I have another question on prasada, if I may. Let us say some devotee has some trouble and does not eat a certain type of food--like some devotees do not eat ghee because of liver trouble. So these devotees, should they take all the prasada?
Srila Prabhupada: No, no. Those who are not perfect devotees may discriminate. But a perfect devotee does not discriminate. Why should you imitate a perfect devotee? So long as you have discrimination, you are not a perfect devotee. So why should you artificially imitate a perfect devotee and eat everything?
Bob: Oh.
Srila Prabhupada: The point is, a perfect devotee does not make any discrimination. Whatever is offered to Krsna is nectar. That's all. Krsna accepts anything from a devotee. "Whatever is offered to Me by My devotee," He accepts. The same thing for a devotee. Don't you see the point? A perfect devotee does not make any discrimination. But if I am not a perfect devotee and I have discrimination, why shall I imitate the perfect devotee? It may not be possible for me to digest everything because I am not a perfect devotee. A devotee should not be a foolish man. It is said:
krsna ye bhaje se bada catura
So a devotee knows his position, and he is intelligent enough to deal with others accordingly.
Chapter Seven
Acting in Knowledge of Krsna
An Indian gentleman: By what kind of actions does one earn good karma?
Srila Prabhupada: Good karma means what is prescribed in the Vedas. Specifically, it is prescribed that one should perform yajna. Yajna means actions for the satisfaction of Lord Visnu, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. So good karma means performance of the yajnas as they are prescribed in the Vedic literatures. And the purpose of this yajna is to satisfy the Supreme Lord. A good, law-abiding citizen is one whose actions satisfy the government. So, good karma is to satisfy Lord Visnu, the Supreme Lord. Unfortunately, modern civilization does not know what the Supreme Personality of Godhead is, what to speak of satisfying Him. people do not know. They are simply busy with material activities. Therefore all of them are performing only bad karma and therefore suffering. They are blind men leading other blind men. And both are then suffering by bad karma. That is very easy to understand. If you do something criminal, you will suffer. If you do something benevolent for the state, for the people, then you are recognized; you are sometimes given a title. This is good and bad karma. So, good karma means you enjoy some material happiness; bad karma means you suffer from material distress. By good karma you get birth in a good family; you get riches, good money. Then you become a learned scholar; you become beautiful also.
[Some time passes.]
Bob: What about the person who--who is not very aware of God, but...
Srila Prabhupada: Then he is an animal. The animal does not know what is good. A person who does not know what is God, or one who does not try to understand what is God--he is an animal. The animals are with four legs, and that animal is with two legs. And Darwin's theory is they are monkeys. So anyone who does not know God, or does not try to understand God, is nothing but an animal.
Bob: What about the innocent people?

Srila Prabhupada: The animal is very innocent. If you cut its throat, it won't protest. So innocence is not a very good qualification. The animals are all innocent. Therefore you get the chance to cut their throats. So to become innocent is not a very good qualification. Our proposition is that one must be very, very intelligent, and then he can understand Krsna. To become an innocent, ignorant simpleton is not a very good qualification. Simplicity is all right, but one should not be unintelligent.
Bob: Can you tell me again what intelligence is?
Srila Prabhupada: Intelligence means... One who knows what he is, what is this world, what is God, what are the interrelations--he is intelligent. The animal does not know what he is. He thinks that he is the body. Similarly, anyone who does not know what he is, he is not intelligent.
Bob: What about a person who does--tries to do--what is right and is very conscientious instead of being unconscious about the things he does? Like the servant who is very honest to his master but knows that if he were not honest he would not be caught. If he stays honest anyway... a person like that? Is that some kind of good karma?
Srila Prabhupada: Yes, to become honest is also good karma. How to become a good man is described in the Bhagavad-gita very elaborately.
daivi sampad vimoksaya
nibandhayasuri mata
So if you become qualified with the daivi sampad (transcendental qualities), then, vimoksaya--you will be liberated. And, nibandhayasuri--if you are qualified with the demoniac qualifications, then you will be more and more entangled. Unfortunately the modern civilization does not know what is liberation and what is entanglement. They are so much ignorant; they do not know. Suppose if I ask you what you mean by liberation, can you answer? [No answer.] And if I ask you what you mean by entanglement, can you answer? [Again no answer.] These words are there in the Vedic literature--liberation and entanglement--but, at the present moment, people do not even know what is liberation and what is entanglement. They are so ignorant and foolish, and still they are proud of their advancement in knowledge. Can you answer what is liberation? You are a professor, teacher, but if I ask you, can you explain what is liberation?
Bob: Not adequately because if I could explain, then I would become liberated very fast.
Srila Prabhupada: But if you do not know what is liberation, then how fast or slow liberation? [Everyone laughs.] There is no question of liberation. It is neither fast nor slow. You should first know what is liberation. If you do not know where the train is going, then what is the use of asking, understanding, whether it is going fast or slow? You do not know your destination. What is liberation?
Bob: Umm...
Srila Prabhupada: I am asking. You daily ask me. I am asking you.
Bob: [Laughs.] Ah--okay... I'll think for a moment.
Srila Prabhupada: Liberation is described in the Srimad-Bhagavatam. The exact Sanskrit word for liberation is mukti. So that is defined in the Srimad-Bhagavatam.
muktir hitvanyatha rupam
svarupena vyavasthitih
One should stop doing all nonsense, and he must be situated in his original position. But this is also more embarrassing because nobody

knows his original position and how to act properly. Because people are generally acting differently, because they do not know what is proper--the modern population is so much ignorant about their life--it is a very awkward position. They do not know.
Bob: Can you tell me who is honest?
Srila Prabhupada: If one does not know what is honesty, how can he be honest? But if you know what is honesty, then you can be honest. What is honesty? First of all explain.
Bob: Aaah, ummm--Honesty is doing what you really feel is right.
Srila Prabhupada: A thief is feeling, "I must steal to provide for my children. It is right." Does it mean that he is honest? Everyone thinks--The butcher thinks, "It is my life. I must cut the throat of the animals daily." Just like that--what is that hunter? And Narada Muni met him?
Syamasundara: Mrgari.
Srila Prabhupada: Yes, Mrgari. Narada asked him, "Why are you killing in this way?" And he said, "Oh, it is my business. My father taught it." So he was honestly doing that. So a feeling of honesty depends on culture. A thiefs culture is different. He thinks stealing is honest.
Bob: So what is honesty?
Srila Prabhupada: Yes, that is my question. [Everyone laughs.] Real honesty is that you should not encroach upon another's property. This is honesty. For instance, this is my table. If you want to take it away while going, is that honesty? So therefore the simple definition of honesty is that you should not encroach upon another's rights. That is honesty.
Bob: So somebody who is honest would be in the mode of goodness? Would that be correct?
Srila Prabhupada: Certainly, certainly. Because the mode of goodness means knowledge. So if you know, "This table does not belong to me; it belongs to Svamiji," you will not try to take it away. Therefore, one must know--be thoroughly well conversant--then he can be honest.
Bob: So, now you have said the mode of goodness was knowledge of God, but somebody may be honest without having very much knowledge of God.
Srila Prabhupada: Hm-m?
Bob: Without--without being honest--without thinking they are honest because it is God's wishes--they just feel like they ought to be honest.
Srila Prabhupada: Mmm. God wishes everyone to be honest. Why should God think otherwise?
Bob: So... so you may follow God's wishes without knowing you are following God's wishes? Like somebody may be in the mode...
Srila Prabhupada: No, following without knowing--that is absurd. You must know the order of God. And if you follow that, then that is honesty.
Bob: But somebody would not be honest without knowing God?
Srila Prabhupada: Yes, because God is the supreme proprietor, the supreme enjoyer, and He is the supreme friend. That is the statement of the Bhagavad-gita. If anyone knows these three things, then he is in full knowledge. These three things only: that God is the proprietor of everything, God is friend of everyone, and God is the enjoyer of everything. For example, everyone knows that in the body, the stomach is the enjoyer. Not the hands, legs, eyes, ears. These are there simply to help the stomach. Eyes--the vulture goes seven miles up to see where there is food for the stomach. Is it not?
Bob: That is so.

Srila Prabhupada: Then the wings fly there, and the jaws catch the food. Similarly, as in this body the stomach is the enjoyer, the central figure of the whole cosmic manifestation, material or spiritual, is Krsna, God. He is the enjoyer. We can understand this just by considering our own bodies. The body is also a creation. The body has the same mechanical nature you will find in the whole universe. The same mechanical arrangement will be found anywhere you go, even in animals. In the human body or in the cosmic manifestation--almost the same mechanism. So you can understand very easily that in this body--any body, your body--the stomach is the enjoyer. There is a central enjoyer. And the stomach is the friend also. Because if you cannot digest food, you see, then all other limbs of the body become weak. Therefore the stomach is the friend. It is digesting and distributing the energy to all the limbs of the body. Is it not?
Bob: It is so.
Srila Prabhupada: Similarly, the central stomach of the whole creation is God, or Krsna. He is the enjoyer, He is the friend, and, as the supreme proprietor, He is maintaining everyone. Just as a king can maintain the whole country's citizens because he is the proprietor. Without being the proprietor, how can one become everyone's friend? So these things have to be understood. Krsna is the enjoyer, Krsna is the proprietor, and Krsna is the friend. If you know these three things, then your knowledge is full; you do not require to understand anything more.
yasmin vijnate sarvam evam vijnatam bhavati
If you simply understand Krsna by these three formulas, then your knowledge is complete. You don't require any more knowledge. But people will not agree. "Why should Krsna be the proprietor? Hitler should be the proprietor. Nixon ..." That is going on. Therefore you are in trouble. But if you understand these three things only, then your knowledge is complete. But you will not accept--you will put forward so many impediments to understanding these three things, and that is the cause of our trouble. But in the Bhagavad-gita it is plainly said:
bhoktaram yajna-tapasam
sarva-loka-mahesvaram.
suhrdam sarva-bhutanam
jnatva mam santim rcchati
["The sages, knowing Me as the ultimate purpose of all sacrifices and austerities, the Supreme Lord of all planets and demigods and the benefactor and well-wisher of all living entities, attain peace from the pangs of material miseries."] But we won't take this. We shall put forward so many false proprietors, false friends, false enjoyers, and they will fight one another. This is the situation of the world. If education is given and people take this knowledge, there is immediately peace (santim rcchati). This is knowledge, and if anyone follows this principle, he is honest. He does not claim, "It is mine." He knows everything: "Oh, it is Krsna's, so therefore everything should be utilized for Krsna's service." That is honesty. If this pencil belongs to me, the etiquette is--My students sometimes ask, "Can I use this pencil?" "Yes, you can." Similarly, if I know that everything belongs to Krsna, I will not use anything without His permission. That is honesty. And that is knowledge. One who does not know is ignorant; he is foolish. And a foolish man commits criminality. All criminals are foolish men. Out of ignorance one commits lawbreaking. So ignorance is not bliss, but it is folly to be wise where ignorance is bliss. That is the difficulty.

The whole world is enjoying ignorance. And when you talk about Krsna consciousness, they do not very much appreciate it. If I say, "Krsna is the proprietor; you are not the proprietor," you will not be very much satisfied. [They laugh.] Just see--ignorance is bliss. So it is my foolishness to say the real truth. Therefore it is folly to be wise where ignorance is bliss. So we are taking the risk of offending people, and they will think we are fools. If I say to a rich man, "You are not the proprietor. Krsna is the proprietor, so whatever money you have, spend it for Krsna," he will be angry.

upadeso hi murkhanam
prakepaya na santaye

"If you instruct a rascal, he'll be angry." Therefore we go as beggars: "My dear sir, you are a very nice man. I am a sannyasi beggar, so I want to construct a temple. Can you spare some money?" So he will think, "Oh, here is a beggar. Give him some money." [They laugh] But if I say, "Dear sir, you have millions of dollars at your disposal. That is Krsna's money. Give it to me. I am Krsna's servant." Oh, he'll... [Everyone laughs.] He will not be very satisfied. Rather, if I go as a beggar, he will give me something. And if I tell him the truth, he will not give me a farthing. [They laugh] We convince him as beggars. We are not beggars. We are Krsna's servants. We don't want anything from anyone. Because we know Krsna will provide everything.

Bob: Oh-h...

Srila Prabhupada: This is knowledge. For instance, a child will sometimes take something important, so we have to flatter him. "Oh, you are so nice. Please take these lozenges and give me that paper. It is nothing; it is paper." And he will say, "Oh, yes. Take. That's nice." Two-paise lozenges--very nice and sweet. So we have to do that. Why? Because a man will go to hell by taking Krsna's money. So some way or other, take some money from him and engage him in the Krsna consciousness movement.

Bob: And then he may not go to hell?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. You save him from going to hell.

needs it. Who is not poor? There are so many gentlemen sitting here. Who is not in need of money and food? You are also in need of money. So how do you distinguish poor from rich? Everyone needs it. If that is your definition... If one needs money and food, then everyone needs money and food. So everyone is poor.

Bob: So, but, well--I was thinking in terms of just people who are relatively poor.

Srila Prabhupada: Relatively, relatively, maybe. You are more hungry than me. That does not mean you are not hungry or I am not hungry. I do not feel hungry now. That does not mean I do not feel hungry or I am not hungry. For the time being you may not be hungry. But tomorrow you'll be hungry.

Bob: What I feel is that--somehow these people--that... Everybody around them may be stealing, but they still stand up and don't steal. These people somehow deserve something good to happen to them.

Srila Prabhupada: But the man who is thinking that he is not stealing is also a thief because he does not know that everything belongs to Krsna. Therefore, whatever he is accepting, he is stealing.

Bob: Is he less of a thief?

Srila Prabhupada: You may not know that I am the proprietor of this wrapper, but if you take it away, are you not stealing?

Bob: But maybe if I know it is yours and I take it, I am a worse thief

than if I do not know whose it is. I just think it may be nobody's, and I take it.
Srila Prabhupada: That is also stealing. Because it must belong to somebody. And you take it without his permission. You may not know exactly who is the proprietor, but you know, "It must belong to someone." That is knowledge. Sometimes we see on the road so many valuable things left there--government property for repairing roads or some electrical work. A man may think, "Oh, fortunately these things are lying here, so I may take them." Is it not stealing?
Bob: It is stealing.
Srila Prabhupada: Yes. He does not know that this is all government property. He takes it away. That is stealing. And when he is caught, he is arrested, and he is punished. So, similarly, whatever you are collecting--suppose you are drinking a glass of water from the river. Is the river your property?
Bob: No.
Srila Prabhupada: Then? It is stealing. You have not created the river. You do not know who is the proprietor. Therefore it is not your property. So, even if you drink a glass of water without knowing to whom it belongs, you are a thief. So you may think, "I am honest," but actually you are a thief. You must remember Krsna. "Oh, Krsna, it is Your creation, so kindly allow me to drink." This is honesty. Therefore a devotee always thinks of Krsna. In all activities: "Oh, it is Krsna's." This is honesty. So without Krsna consciousness, everyone is a rascal, is a thief, is a rogue, is a robber. These qualifications. Therefore our conclusion is that anyone who does not understand Krsna has no good qualifications. Neither is he honest, nor has he knowledge. Therefore he is a third-class man. Is that correct? What do you think, Giriraja?
Giriraja: [a disciple]: Yes.
Srila Prabhupada: This is not dogmatism. This is a fact. [Some time elepses.] So, you have understood what is knowledge and what is honesty?
Bob: I--in a way. In a way.
Srila Prabhupada: And is there another way? [Bob laughs.] Is there any other way? Defy it! [Bob laughs again. Srila Prabhupada also laughs.] Another way? Giriraja?
Giriraja: No.
Srila Prabhupada: Is there an alternative? We do not say anything that can be defied by anyone. That experience we have. Rather, we defy everyone: "Any questions?" Till now, Krsna has given us protection. In big, big meetings in big, big countries, after speaking I ask, "Any questions?"
Bob: Now, I have none.
Srila Prabhupada: In London, we had--how many days, lectures in that--what is that? Conway Hall?
A devotee: Twelve days. Conway Hall.
Srila Prabhupada: Conway Hall.
A devotee: Twelve days.
Srila Prabhupada: Yes. So after every meeting I was asking, "Any questions?"
Bob: Did you get many questions?
Srila Prabhupada: Oh, yes. Many foolish questions. [Everyone laughs.]
Bob: Let me ask one more question. What is being foolish?
Srila Prabhupada: One having no knowledge is to be considered foolish.
An Indian gentleman: Prabhupada, I have one personal question. Can I

ask?
Srila Prabhupada: Yes.
Indian gentleman: Some time ago in Calcutta they observed a week--it was named, "Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Week."
Srila Prabhupada: Mmm. [He gives a quick laugh] This is another foolishness. They are advertising prevention of cruelty, and they are maintaining thousands of slaughterhouses. You see? That is another foolishness.
Indian gentleman: So I wanted just to ask--
Srila Prabhupada: Asking--before you ask, I give you the answer. [All laugh] That is another foolishness. They are regularly cruel to animals, and they are making a society...
Bob: Maybe this is--
Srila Prabhupada: Suppose a gang of thieves has a signboard--"Goodman and Company." You sometimes find such a signboard.
Syamasundara: Our landlord in the San Francisco temple was named Goodman.
Srila Prabhupada: The philosophy is that when an animal is not properly nourished, that is cruelty. Therefore instead of allowing it to starve, better to kill it. That is their theory. Is it not?
Bob: Yes.
Srila Prabhupada: They say, "Oh, it is better to kill him than to give him so much pain." That theory is coming in communist countries. An old man--grandfather--is suffering, so better to kill him. And there--in Africa there is a class of men who make a festival by killing their great-grandfathers. Is it not? Yes.
Syamasundara: They eat them?
Srila Prabhupada: Yes. [Syamasundara laughs.] Yes?
A devotee: I had an uncle and aunt. They were in the Army. So when they went overseas, they could not take their dog with them. So they said, "The poor dog. He will be so heartbroken not to be with us," so they put him to sleep--killed him.
Srila Prabhupada: In Gandhi's life also, he once killed one calf or some cow. It was suffering very much. So Gandhi ordered, "Instead of letting it suffer, just kill it."
Giriraja: Yesterday you said that the spiritual master may have to suffer due to the sinful activities of his disciples. What do you mean by sinful activities?
Srila Prabhupada: Sinful activities means that you promised, "I shall follow the regulative principles." If you do not follow, that is sinful. That is the promise. Very simple. You break the promise and do nasty things; therefore you are sinful. Is it not?
Giriraja: Yes. [pause] But there are some things that we're instructed to do...
Srila Prabhupada: Hm-m?
Giriraja: There are other things which we're instructed to do which, even though we try to do, we cannot do perfectly yet.
Srila Prabhupada: How is that? You try to do and cannot do? How is that?
Giriraja: Like chanting attentively. Sometimes we try to, but--
Srila Prabhupada: Well, that is not a fault. Suppose you are trying to do something. Due to your inexperience if you sometimes fail, that is not a fault. You are trying. There is a verse in the Bhagavatam--hm-m--that if a devotee is trying his best but due to his incapability he sometimes fails, Krsna excuses him. And in the Bhagavad-gita also it is said:

api cet suduracaro
bhajate mam ananya-bhak
Sometimes not willingly but due to past bad habits--habit is second nature--one does something nonsensical. But that does not mean he is faulty. But he must repent for that--"I have done this." And he should try to avoid it as far as possible. But habit is second nature. Sometimes, in spite of your trying hard, maya is so strong that it pushes with Pitfalls. That can be excused. Krsna excuses. But those who are doing something willingly are not excused. On the strength that I am a devotee, if I think, "Because I am chanting, I may therefore commit all this nonsense, and it will be nullified," that is the greatest offense.

Chapter Eight
Advancing in Krsna Consciousness

Springfield, New Jersey
Dear Prabhupada,
I offer my humble obeisances.
I have been associating with the devotees of the New York temple. With the association of such fine, advanced devotees, I hope that I may make some advancement in Krsna consciousness. My fiancee has started to come to the temple and is chanting a little. She knew nothing about Krsna consciousness until I wrote her about it from India. Atreya Rsi has been kind enough to invite us to his home so that we may see an ideal householder life.
I went to Bombay the end of April for termination from the Peace Corps. I was fortunate enough to come down with a minor illness, so that I had to stay in Bombay for two weeks. I spent the time with the advanced and kind devotees at Juhu. Unfortunately you had left five days previously.
I understand so little, but I have faith in the process of Krsna consciousness and hope to take to it more and more.
I look forward to Atreya Rsi's description of the temple in Los Angeles and hope that I may personally hear you in New York.
Thank you for the kindness you have shown to a very undeserving boy.
Sincerely,
Bob Cohen
A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami
ISKCON Los Angeles
Bob Cohen
Springfield, New Jersey
My dear Bob,
Please accept my blessings. I thank you very much for your letter dated June 12, 1972. I have noted the sentiments expressed therein with great pleasure. I am very glad to hear that you are associating with us. I know that you are a very good boy, very intelligent, and your behavior is gentle, so I have all confidence that very quickly Krsna will bestow all His blessings upon you, and you will feel yourself becoming perfectly happy in Krsna consciousness. One makes his advancement in Krsna consciousness by voluntarily giving up his attachment to material nature, or maya. Such renunciation is called tapasya. But we are not very willing to perform austerities without good reason; therefore any man with a good scientific and philosophical mind, like your good self, must first appreciate what transcendental knowledge is. If you get knowledge, automatically tapasya will follow, and then you make your

advancement in spiritual life. So to get knowledge is the first item for anyone who is hoping to find the perfection of his life. Therefore I advise you to read our books daily as far as possible and try to understand the subject matter from different angles of vision by discussing it frequently with the devotees at the New York temple. In this way you will gradually become convinced, and by your sincere attitude and devotional service you will make progress.

Yes, having some faith in me and in this Krsna consciousness process is the first and only requirement for getting actual wisdom. If there is faith, understanding will follow. And as your understanding increases, so will your disgust with the spell of illusory energy. And when you voluntarily give up your entanglements in the material world, then the progress is assured.

I think we are just now typing up the tapes of those conversations we held in Mayapur, and we shall be publishing them as a book. It will be called Perfect Questions, Perfect Answers. I shall send you a copy as soon as they are ready to distribute. Meanwhile, I shall be stopping in New York for two or three days on my way to London for the Ratha-yatra Festival there. I am not yet certain when I shall be arriving in New York, but it will be some time in the early part of July. You may keep in regular contact with Bali Mardana regarding the arrival date, and I shall be very much engladdened to meet with you in New York once again. Again we shall discuss if you have any questions.

Hoping this will meet you in good health and a happy mood,

Your ever well-wisher,

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami

Chapter Nine

Deciding for the Future

Bob: I received your very kind letter.

Srila Prabhupada: Oh.

Bob: About a week ago.

Srila Prabhupada: Now, you are a very intelligent boy. You can try to understand this philosophy. It is very important. For sense gratification people are wasting so much energy. They are not aware of what is going to happen in the next life. There is a next life, but foolish people are ignorant. This life is preparation for the next life. That they do not know. The modern education and its universities are completely in darkness about this simple knowledge. We are changing bodies every moment--that is a medical fact. After leaving this body, we will have to accept another body. How are we going to accept that body? What kind of body? This can also be known. For example, if someone is being educated, one can understand that when he passes his examination, he is going to be an engineer or medical practitioner. Similarly, in this life, you can prepare yourself to become something in the next life. Barbara: [Bob's wife] Can we decide what we want to be next life?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, you can decide. We have decided that next life we are going to Krsna. This is our decision--back home, back to Godhead. Suppose you want to become educated. After this decision that you are going to be an engineer or you are going to be a medical practitioner, with that objective you prepare and educate yourself. Similarly, you can decide what you are going to do next life. But if you don't decide, then the material nature will decide.

Barbara: Could I have been Krsna conscious in my last life?

Srila Prabhupada: It doesn't matter. But you can become. Take advantage of our Krsna consciousness movement.

A devotee: She's asking if it was possible that in her last life she was a Krsna devotee and has come back again.
Srila Prabhupada: When one is perfectly Krsna's devotee, he does not come back. But if there is a little deficiency, then there is a possibility of coming back. But even though there is a deficiency, he comes back to a nice family. Sucinam srimatam gehe yoga-bhrasto 'bhijayate. ["The unsuccessful yogi takes birth in a religious or aristocratic family."] Human intelligence can decide for the future. That is human intelligence. The animal cannot decide. We have discriminatory power. If I do this, I will be benefited; if I do that, I will not be benefited. This is there in human life. So you have to use it properly. You should know what is our goal of life and decide in that way. That is human civilization....
Barbara: Have you ever seen Krsna?
Srila Prabhupada: Yes.
Barbara: You have?
Srila Prabhupada: Daily. Every moment.
Barbara: But not in the material body?
Srila Prabhupada: He has no material body.
Barbara: Well, in the temple here they have pictures of Krsna....
Srila Prabhupada: That is not a material body. You are seeing materially because you have material eyes. Because you have material eyes, you cannot see the spiritual form. Therefore He kindly appears to be in a material body so that you can see. However, because He has kindly made Himself just fit for your seeing, that does not mean He has a material body. Suppose the President of the United States kindly comes to your house. That does not mean that his position and your position are the same. It is his kindness. Out of love, he may come to your house, but that does not mean he is on the same level as you. Similarly, because we cannot see Krsna with our present eyes, Krsna therefore appears before us as a painting, as made of stone, as made of wood. And Krsna is not different from these paintings and wood because everything is Krsna.
Barbara: After we die, what happens to our spirit?
Srila Prabhupada: You get another body.
Barbara: Immediately?
Srila Prabhupada: Yes. Just as when you change your apartment: you fix up your new apartment first; then you leave this one and go there.
Barbara: So do we know what type of body we will get?
Srila Prabhupada: Yes, provided you are qualified. Otherwise nature will arrange for it. Those who know--they know what is there. But for those who do not know, nature will arrange things. If you do not know, this means you have not prepared your life, so accidentally, at the time of death, your mentality will create another body, and nature will supply it.
Barbara: And chanting--what does chanting do?
Srila Prabhupada: That you can ask these boys [the devotees]. They will explain.
Bob: If Krsna controls everything, how does Krsna control a nondevotee?
Srila Prabhupada: By maya. Just as the government controls everything. A kingdom is controlled by the king's departments.
Bob: And how does Krsna control a devotee?
Srila Prabhupada: Just as you control your beloved. For example, if you have a beloved child, you control him for his benefit. If he is going to touch fire, you will immediately tell him, "No, no, my dear child. Don't touch it." So a Krsna conscious person, a devotee, is never misled,

because Krsna is always guiding him, whereas those who are not Krsna conscious are in the charge of maya, and maya will do the needful, as you have seen.
Bob: Is it preset, when we're born, the time that we'll die?
Srila Prabhupada: What?
Bob: Is the time that I'm going to die, and others are going to die, preset before we are born? When I'm born, do I have a certain given life span?
Srila Prabhupada: Yes.
A devotee: And he cannot change that?
Srila Prabhupada: No, he cannot change it, but Krsna can change it.
Devotee: If he commits suicide, is that also preset?
Srila Prabhupada: Not preset. That you can do because you have a little independence. It is not natural to commit suicide; it is unnatural. So because we have independence, we can go from nature to "un-nature." A prisoner cannot go out of the prison house naturally, but somehow or other he arranges to jump over the wall and goes away. Then he becomes a criminal for further imprisonment. Naturally, the prisoner cannot go out of the prison house, but if somehow or other he manages to escape, that means he becomes again a criminal. He will be arrested again, and his term of imprisonment will be increased, or he will be punished more. So, naturally we cannot violate destiny. But if we do it, then we will suffer. But our destiny can be changed by Krsna when we are Krsna conscious. We do not do it, but Krsna will do it. Krsna says: aham tvam sarva-papebhyo mok-sayisyami: "I shall give you protection." That change takes place for my protection.
There are two stages--nondevotee and devotee. The nondevotee is under the control of material nature, and the devotee is under the direct control of Krsna. In the office of a big man, an executive of a big company, there are many employees, and they are controlled by different departmental superintendents. But although outside of home he controls indirectly, the same man at home is controlling his children directly. But he is always a controller. Similarly, God is the controller always. When one becomes a devotee, he is controlled by God; when he is a nondevotee, he is controlled by His agent, maya. But he has to be controlled. For example, every citizen of America is controlled by the government. When he is all right, the civil department controls him; when he is not all right, the criminal department controls him. But he cannot say, "I am not controlled." That is not possible. Everyone is controlled. If somebody says, "I am not controlled," he is not sane; he is crazy. Everyone is controlled. So either you are controlled directly by God, or you are controlled by His agency, maya. Being controlled by maya, you spoil your life; you remain in material existence one birth after another, changing your bodies. But if you choose to be controlled by God, then after this body, you go back home, back to Godhead. Then your life is successful. You cannot exist without being controlled; that is not possible. That is intelligence. And that is stated in the Bhagavad-gita. Bahunam janmanam antejnanavan mam prapadyate: "After many births of traveling or speculation, one surrenders unto Me." Vasudevah sarvam iti: "Krsna, You are everything. So I have come. Accept me. I am now fully surrendered unto You, and You control me. I am controlled. For so long I have been controlled by these rascals. There is no benefit. I have been controlled by my senses. So under the control of the senses I have served so-called family, society, country, nation--up to serving the dogs. But nothing has given me satisfaction. Therefore now I have

good sense; I put myself under Your control. Instead of being controlled by dog, let me be controlled by God." This is Krsna consciousness. Have you not seen how a man is controlled by a dog? In the street the dog stops, passes stool, and his master will stand and wait. Is it not? He is passing stool and urine, and the master is thinking, "I am master." But he is being controlled. That is maya. He has become servant of the dog, but he is thinking, "I am master." So unless one is Krsna conscious, one cannot understand. We can understand that this rascal is being controlled by his dog, but he is thinking that he is the master. We can understand. What do you think? Has he not become controlled by the dog?

Bob: That is so.

Srila Prabhupada: But he is thinking, "I am the master of the dog." A family man is controlled by his wife, his children, by his servants, by everyone, but he is thinking, "I am master." President Nixon is thinking that he is master of his country, but he is controlled. At once he can be dismissed by the public, his servants! And he will take a position, claiming, "I will give you very good service," and "I shall be a firstclass servant." Therefore people vote, "All right, you become president." And he is advertising: "Reelect me! Reelect me!" That means he is a servant. But he is thinking, "I am master." That is the position. Maya. One who is controlled by maya is thinking himself master, but he is a servant. And a devotee never thinks to himself, "I am master," only "I am servant." That is the difference between maya and reality. He at least knows: "I am never master. I am always a servant." When a servant is thinking, "I am master," that is called illusion. But when a servant thinks, "I am a servant," that is not illusion. That is mukti, liberation. Because he is not controlled by false thoughts. Try to think about this subject matter. A devotee is never controlled by false thoughts. He knows his position. Svarupena vyavasthitih. Mukti, liberation, means to be situated in one's own constitutional position. I am a servant. So if I know that I am a servant, that is my liberation. And if I think that I am master, that is bondage. This is the difference between conditioned life and liberated life.

So these Krsna conscious devotees are always thinking that they are servants of Krsna. Therefore they are all liberated. They do not endeavor for liberation. They are already liberated because they are situated in their constitutional position. They are not artificially thinking, "I am master." Otherwise, everyone is thinking, "I am master." That is illusion. You cannot be master in any state of your life; you must remain a servant. That is your position. When one thinks artificially that he is master, that is his conditioned life. And when one voluntarily surrenders to the supreme master, that is his liberation. A devotee does not try for liberation separately. As soon as he surrenders to Krsna or Krsna's representative, he is liberated.

Bob: Prabhupada, people that engage in religions, like these "Jesus freaks" and other people, claim that Jesus is guiding them. Can this be so?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, but they are not taking the guidance. Just like the Christians. Jesus is guiding them, "Thou shalt not kill," but they are killing. Where is the Jesus guidance? Simply saying, "I am guided by Jesus Christ"--will that do? "But I don't care for his words." Is that guidance? Nobody is being guided by Jesus Christ. Their claim is false. It is very hard to find a man who is actually being guided by Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ's guidance is available, but nobody is caring for

him. They have taken Jesus Christ as contractor to take up their sins. That is their philosophy. They commit all kinds of sins, and poor Jesus Christ will be responsible. That is their religion. Therefore they say, "We have a very good religion. For all our sinful activities, Jesus Christ will die." So is that good religion? They have no sympathy for Jesus Christ. He died for our sins. Why should we commit sins again? Such a great life has been sacrificed for our sins, so we should be guided by Jesus Christ. But if you take it otherwise--"Ah, we shall go on committing all sins, and Jesus Christ will make a contract to nullify all my sins; I'll simply go to the church and confess and come back and again do all nonsense"--do you think that shows very good intelligence?
Bob: No.
Srila Prabhupada: Actually, one who is guided by Jesus Christ will certainly get liberation. But it is very hard to find a man who is actually being guided by Jesus Christ.
Bob: What about the "Jesus freaks," the young people that have joined the Jesus movement? They read the Bible very often, and they try to--
Srila Prabhupada: But violence is against the Bible's injunctions. How can they kill if they are following the Bible?
Bob: I asked one this, and he claimed that Jesus was also eating meat in the Bible.
Srila Prabhupada: That's all right. He may eat anything. He is powerful. But he has ordered, "Thou shalt not kill. You must stop killing." He is powerful. He can eat the whole world. But you cannot compare to Jesus Christ. You cannot imitate Jesus Christ; you have to abide by his order. Then you are guided by Jesus Christ. That is actually obedience. That is explained in the Bhagavata. One who is isvara, who is empowered, can do anything, but we cannot imitate. We have to abide by his order: "What he says to me, that I will do." You cannot imitate. You say that Jesus Christ ate meat. Admitting that, you do not know in what condition he ate meat. He is himself eating meat, but he is advising others not to kill. Do you think that Jesus Christ was contradicting himself?
Bob: No.
Srila Prabhupada: He cannot do that. That is real faith in him--that he cannot do that. So why has he eaten meat? He knows, but he has asked me not to kill. I have to follow. That is the real system. You are not Jesus Christ; you cannot imitate him. He has sacrificed his life for God. Can you
do that? So why shall you imitate Jesus Christ? You are imitating Jesus Christ by eating meat. Why not imitate Jesus Christ and sacrifice your life for spreading God consciousness? What do you think? Yes, when you preach you can say what you think. They are so-called Christians--but what are they doing for God? Just consider the sun. The sun is absorbing urine. Can you drink urine? If you want to imitate the sun--"Oh, here is the sun absorbing urine. Let me drink urine"--can you? Jesus Christ is powerful; he can do everything. But we cannot imitate; we have to simply abide by his order. That is real Christianity. We cannot imitate a powerful man. That is wrong. In our Vedic literature, there was a poison ocean, so people could not find out what to do with it. Then Lord Siva said, "All right, I'll drink it." So he drank the whole poison ocean and kept it in his throat. Can you drink poison? Not the ocean--just one cup? So how can we imitate Lord Siva? Lord Siva never advised that we drink poison. So you have to abide by the advice, not imitate. These LSD and marijuana people say that Lord Siva used to smoke ganja. But Lord Siva drank the whole poisoned ocean. Can you do that? Lord Siva's

instructions should be taken. He says that the best worship is worship of Visnu. Visnor aradhanam param. When he was asked by Parvati what method of worship is best, then he said, "The best worship is worship of Lord Visnu [Krsna]." There are many demigods, but he recommended Visnu worship as the best. And better than Visnu worship is worship of a Vaisnava. Tadiyanam--His servants, or those who are in relation to Him. For instance, we are worshiping this plant, tulasi. We are not worshiping all plants, but because this tulasi has a very intimate connection with Krsna, Visnu, we are therefore worshiping her. Similarly, if anything is intimately related with Krsna, worship of that thing is better than worship of Visnu.

Bob: Why is that?

Srila Prabhupada: Because Krsna will be pleased. Suppose you have a dog and some friends come and pat your dog. [Srila Prabhupada makes big patting motions.] You become pleased. You become pleased: "Oh, he is my good friend." You see how they think. We see this--some friend comes and says, "My, what a nice dog you have." [Laughter.] [Some Indian guests enter the room.]

Srila Prabhupada: Please have some prasada.

[Srila Prabhupada continues speaking with his guests, sometimes in English and sometimes Hindi. It is his last day in New York, and his plane to London is scheduled to leave in only afew hours, Bob has brought a car to drive Srila Prabhupada to Kennedy Airport. The davotees are scurying about, bringing luggage to the car, putting the manuscripts of Srila Prabhupada's latest translating work in ordar, and making other last-minute arrangements.]

Syamasundara: Everything's ready, Srila Prabhupada. The car is waiting for us.

Srila Prabhupada: So? We can go now? All right. Hare Krsna!

Concluding words

On July 19, 1976, His Divine Grace Srila Prabhupada accepted my wife and me as his disciples and initiated us with the names Bhakti-devi dasi and Brahmatirtha dasa. As I reflect back on that day, I can see how fortunate I was to have met His Divine Grace and my Godbrothers in the Hare Krsna movement.

When I was handed my beads at initiation, I promised to follow the regulative principles and to chant God's names daily. Four years previously, Srila Prabhupada had advised me to follow these principles, and within six months, he said, I could be like the other devotees; all unnecessary things (anarthas), such as mundane movies and restaurants, would cease to attract me. "The whole human life is meant for purification," he said. I was interested in being purified, even though I did not really know what purification meant. I had gone to India with the Peace Corps hoping to find a higher level of consciousness. I could not believe that satisfying the senses was the all in all, yet I myself was bound by the senses. Later I could understand that yoga means becoming free from the dictation of the senses.

Upon returning to America, I started graduate school in geology, got married, and became somewhat entangled in domestic responsibilities, but I would very often think of my conversations with Srila Prabhupada and of his instructions. One of his primary instructions was simply to associate with the devotees, and this I gladly did. Devotees are different: by understanding that loving service to the Supreme Lord is the goal of life, they avoid getting caught up in the petty affairs of sense gratification and false ego. Visiting the temple was most

refreshing. Gradually, my wife and I became friends with many devotees and wanted somehow to do some service for the movement. I sponsored a bhakti-yoga club at the university, and our apartment served as a way station for traveling parties of devotees.

As we followed Srila Prabhupada's instructions, even our eating became purified. In India I had told Srila Prabhupada that I could not offer my food as the devotees do because I did not understand that Krsna is God. So he told me simply to thank God for my food before eating. This we did, and finally our devotion matured, and we started actually offering our food to the Supreme Lord. What a wonderful feeling, to be cooking for the Supreme Lord! This actually freed us from the control of the tongue.

Finally, we were ready to become involved fully in temple life. By Krsna's grace, I obtained a job near a temple in Texas and began to take part in all the temple programs. In this way, all the anarthas disappeared, just as Srila Prabhupada had predicted. It was like having a burden lifted from our shoulders. We were no longer servants of our senses, but servants of God and His devotees. The value of Srila Prabhupada's instructions had become clear. A human being is not meant to labor like an ass and enjoy like a dog. Purification means coming to a higher level of consciousness.

Even though I have been initiated, I still admire my Godbrothers' spiritual awareness and wish to advance. Actually, initiation is the beginning.

Brahmatirtha dasa Adhikari
(Bob Cohen)
Houston, Texas

“Perfect Questions - Perfect Answers” Conversations between His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada and Bob Cohen, a Peace Corps worker in India.

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